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L E W I S    B R O W N E

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HOW ODD  
OF GOD

*AN INTRODUCTION TO  
THE JEWS*

"How odd  
Of God  
To Choose  
The Jews."

—W. N. EWER.

NEW YORK

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THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1934

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*Set up and electrotyped.*  
*Published April, 1934.*

SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY THE FERRIS PRINTING COMPANY

LION FEUCHTWANGER

*dem Freunde  
und tapferen Kämpfer*



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# THE ARGUMENT

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## CHAPTER ONE: THE SECLUSIVE JEW

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1. Why have the Jews survived?
2. People used to believe it was because they are God's "chosen people,"
3. But their commonplace origin hardly bears out such a claim.
4. Besides, why was survival denied to the Ten Tribes of Israel,
5. And reserved only for the two small tribes of Judah?
6. Obviously it was because Judah was influenced by the Prophets,
7. Who taught the people that they must suffer until in the fullness of time the Messiah would redeem them.
8. Believing this, the Jews walled themselves in with the Holy Law, for thus they hoped to preserve themselves.
9. Their Holy Law in the beginning was bound up with the Temple and its sacrificial cult;
10. But after the destruction of Jerusalem, the priests lost their power,
11. And the rabbis who supplanted them elaborated the Law into a complex ritual governing everyday life.
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13. And lent a grace to their harried lives.

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# C H A P T E R     O N E

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I WANT to tell you about my people. I want to tell you about them because today, even more than in all the past, a glare is on them and their presence fills your eyes. We Jews are very few in number. We make up less than one hundredth of the world's population. There are more Koreans on earth than Jews, more Nigerians, more Punjabi. Yet for all that, we seem to glut the earth; you see us and hear of us everywhere. And this obtrusiveness on our part disturbs you. Naturally. It is strange enough that we should have been able to survive at all. But that we should have actually thrived—that smacks of black magic. Already thirty-two hundred years ago (at which time the Greeks were still savages and the Romans were not yet named) Pharaoh Menephtah caused to be inscribed on a black granite slab: "Israel is crushed; its seed is no more!" Yet Israel is still here, and fuller of seed than ever. And you wonder why. There must be, you feel, some dark secret behind it all, and you wonder what it can be.

That is the riddle of Israel, and the Sphinx propounding it has an air all its own. Its countenance,

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weathered by tears rather than rain, is not smooth and blank, but deeply carved and taunting. With its sharp features—not least its unshattered nose—it appears to grin in derision. "Come on," it seems to say, "see if you can solve my enigma!"

### 2

Innumerable writers have accepted that challenge, and their books and tracts make up an enormous literature. Most of that literature, however, has little meaning for us today, for it is illumined by the glow of faith rather than the light of reason. Even until recent days men have been prone to seek the answer to Israel's riddle in the realm of the supernatural—which is a realm wherein to lose answers rather than find them. Such men have gone to the Scriptures for their clues, culling verses from the ancient Hebrew prophets to prove that God's hand is in this affair. Tonsured humanists at Bologna, hairy swineherds preaching in Moravian huts, Jesuit missionaries, Polish rabbis, Oxford exegetes, and Mormon elders: they have all been of one mind in that regard. They have said that we Jews are God's Chosen People, His eternal "witnesses" on earth. We are no less than the central *dramatis personæ* in a play which will not end until the Kingdom comes. Therefore we have *had* to survive: it is in the Providential scheme of things.

The oddity of that whole scheme never seems to



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occur to such writers. Why only one people should have been thus favored, and why that one should be the Jews, is left altogether unexplained. Indeed, the very questions seem gratuitous to these pious ones. "Is it not enough," they argue, "that the Lord in His infinite wisdom *did* single them out?" And if one dares to ask, "But how do you know He did?"—then like a club comes the retort: "It says so in the Bible!"

There was a time when such a retort could silence the very wisest of men. As late as the seventeenth century even the great scientists—for instance Kepler and Newton—were quite credulous as to the authority of the Bible. They groped about in the dark of the Apocalypses as zealously as the most naïve of village exhorters, for they were no less certain that in that dark there was light to be found on the destiny of the races. And not alone academicians, but ostensibly hard-headed statesmen were then swayed by Bible testimony. It is recorded, for instance, that when Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam sought to convince Cromwell's Parliament that the Jews ought to be permitted to live in England, his most telling argument was based on the Holy Writ. He reminded them that according to the prophecies the Redeemer's coming would be preceded by the ingathering of the Jews "from *all* the countries." But how, he asked, could there ever be such an ingathering unless first there were Jews living in *all* the countries? . . . The question seemed unanswerable

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to the good Puritans then ruling England. They let the Jews come in.

But that was almost three hundred years ago, and the intellectual climate has since changed in our world. (Can one imagine Congress admitting the German Jewish refugees to the United States on the ground that they are of God's Chosen People?) The supernatural character and insuperable authoritativeness of the Bible may still be accepted by simple folk; but the enlightened are of another mind. Fresh storehouses of knowledge have been discovered in these past three centuries, and the enlightened of our day, having come into the new wealth, cannot possibly believe as do those who have remained poor. Spinoza, Voltaire, Huxley, Renan—not to mention the magniloquent Robert Ingersoll—have not lived and taught in vain. It is no longer deemed needful, at least among thinking men and women, to go to the Bible for clues to the portent of history. They may still regard the Scriptures as exalted literature aglow with moral fervor. But as the depository of all knowledge?—never.

### 3

It is now realized that the Bible was written by men, and that these men belonged to a people fundamentally like any other on earth. There was nothing natively unique about the ancient Hebrews. When they emerged out of the great Arabian waste, almost four thousand

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years ago, they were just a wild-eyed, half-starved, primitive rabble looking for a fertile place in which to dwell. They saw such a place in the strip of tilth between the Jordan and the Great Sea, and, hacking their way into it, they made it their own. Thereupon, like any other desert horde come into possession of a verdant land, they slowly and laboredly acquired the rudiments of civilization. Under the tutelage of the surviving Canaanites, who were now their slaves, they learnt to fashion iron tools instead of stone ones, and to dwell in mud-walled huts instead of in tents. They took to tilling the soil—a revolutionary step for these erstwhile nomads—and to building fortified villages. Their tribes merged into a precarious sort of nation, and their tribal “judges” were supplanted by a king. Their local witch-doctors became priests and law-givers, and their desert terrors gave way to an established faith.

The entire development was thoroughly conventional. Much the same thing had occurred centuries earlier in Egypt and Babylonia; and much the same thing was to occur again when the primitive Aryans reached the Ægean lands, and when the barbarous Franks fought their way into Gaul. Except that those nations, and scores of others less well known, managed to succeed far more conspicuously than did the Hebrews. For the truth is that as a nation the Hebrews did not succeed at all. They never reached out and laid hold of an empire; their soldiers never pillaged the

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storehouses of distant kings. At the height of their power, under David and Solomon, their suzerainty extended over a region no larger than modern Esthonia or the state of Maryland. Their capital, Jerusalem, was no more than a mountain stronghold such as one could have found in any minor native state in Central India a century ago. Its most pretentious structure, the royal palace, was built of logs and rough-hewn boulders, and with all its courts, harem-quarters, armory, and Temple, it occupied a site not much larger than one of our city blocks. The Temple itself, it is startling to realize, was but thirty feet by ninety in extent—about the size of the average village motion-picture theater today!

### 4

A petty principality, that is all those Hebrews ever possessed. And (again conventionally) they possessed it for but a brief while. Hardly had they achieved unity under Saul when they fell apart again after Solomon. Thenceforth they formed two pettier principalities, Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. And after some two hundred years of recurrent strife and incessant wretchedness, the larger of those principalities was gobbled up by a neighboring empire. In 722 B.C. the Assyrians swept down on Israel, carried its populace away captive, and repopled the land with "heathens" brought in from afar. From then on we hear no more of the "Ten Tribes" who were the Israelites. Evidently

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they mingled with the peoples among whom they were set down, with the Medians or the Persians perhaps. They were literally "lost"—just as the Assyrians in turn were "lost" a little later.

There was no reason why the Israelites should have escaped such a fate. Their end like their beginning was in the normal nature of things. Once they were bereft of their land they had nothing left to preserve them as a separate people. Their religion, which had been no more than a local cult, lay buried in the ruins of the old altars. The utter rout they had suffered proved at least one thing to the tribesmen of Israel: Yahveh, the God on whose support they had counted, had failed them. Though they were His "chosen people," He had been impotent to save them when the Assyrians, the "chosen people" of other gods, had invaded their land. Therefore the Israelites refused to worship Yahveh any longer. Instead (can one blame them?) they took to worshipping the manifestly more powerful gods of the Assyrians. And with that apostasy they sealed their doom.

### 5

But—and only here does the story at last cease to be banal—it fared quite otherwise with the two small tribes who were left in Judah. Spared by the Assyrians (for a heavy tribute) they were able to remain in their rock-strewn hills for yet several generations. And when

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at last, in 586 B.C., they too were driven from their home, they did not get "lost." Why? Evidently because something had come into their lives, something which had failed to come into the lives of the Israelites. What it was we know from the Bible. A succession of radical preachers had arisen in Judah and had breathed a fire into the people. The earliest of those preachers, Amos and Hosea, had tried to breathe that same fire into the Israelites; but they had come too late. It was solely the surviving Judeans who received the flame, for during the century and a half of their prolonged existence as a nation they were brought under the influence of a whole host of such incendiaries. There were Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah, and others of lesser renown; and each of these in turn did his meed of godly mischief. For mischief it was, seeing how it disturbed the people, yet also godly, seeing what goodness it brought forth.

In effect these prophets revolutionized the religion of Judah, changing it from a primitive sacrificial cult to a supernal ethical devotion. They made the Judeans understand what Amos had tried in vain to teach the Israelites: that Yahveh was not a placable local djinn, but the just Lord of Heaven and Earth. Therefore the one way to please Him, they cried, was not to offer Him fatlings and rams, but to obey His commandments. The men of Judah must cease to rob the poor and oppress the weak; they must no longer pervert justice or con-

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done wickedness. They must cleanse themselves of lust and hatefulness, and be decent, kindly, pure. If they refused, then despite that they were Yahveh's "chosen people," indeed *just because of it*, they would be destroyed—even as Israel had been destroyed. For, said the prophets, the fall of that kingdom had not been a chance happening; it had been Providential. Israel had been devoured not because Yahveh had been impotent to save it. Yahveh Himself had *caused* it to be devoured. And so also would He cause Judah to be devoured—unless it repented. He would bring down a mighty host to despoil and destroy it utterly, to raze its cities, burn its granaries, and take its people captive. "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins." The inevitable Day of Doom would befall the land—the "day of terror and distress, of wasting and desolation, of darkness and gloom." There was but one way of averting such an end: the people must mend its ways. "Repent," thundered those prophets, "repent while there is yet time!"

Of course, the people did not repent. (Had they done so, perhaps they would indeed have been spared, for both turns would have been in the nature of miracles.) Instead they persisted in their human waywardness, and—though that may not have been the reason—the prophetic warnings came true. A new power, Babylon, arose in the east, and in its lust for empire it duly reached out and laid hold of Judah. Jerusalem was

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sacked, and all save the lowliest peasants either fled or were taken captive. And by all the precedents of history that should have spelled the end of this people. As with the ten great tribes of Israel, so with the two small tribes of Judah: they should have been swallowed up once they were driven from their land.

### 6

But instead they persisted. Though numbering no more than a hundred thousand in all the world (fewer Jews than there are now in metropolitan Boston alone!) and scattered from the Nile to the Persian Gulf, they somehow succeeded in preserving their seed until eventually it took root again and waxed mighty. If there is an economic explanation for this anomaly—and certain historians will say there must be—it is difficult to discern. Lacking as we do all precise knowledge of the “material” influences, we are forced to attribute the survival to a “spiritual” one. Apparently those Judean exiles preserved their identity because they clung to their religion. They did not turn from Yahveh as had their Israelite brethren in a time of like travail, for they did not interpret their downfall as a proof of His feebleness. On the contrary, that downfall left the Judeans more convinced than ever that Yahveh was all-powerful. Had He not warned them by the mouth of His prophets that He would bring this calamity upon them? Therefore it was wisdom to hold fast to such a God,



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for if He could thus carry out His threats, He could also carry out His promises. And there was one promise He had made repeatedly: that the Jews would remain His *am segullah*, His "peculiar people," and that ultimately He would restore them to glory. True, it did look strange that a deity should afflict His favorites even temporarily. But according to those prophets, Yahveh was a strange deity. He was not a godling moved by caprice, but the Eternal who wrought Justice. His favor toward the Hebrews lay in that He had revealed to them His Law; and because they had transgressed it He had had no alternative but to bring them low. He had had to make an example of them, so that all the world might learn to fear Him and keep His commandments. For, said the prophets, such was the price the seed of Abraham must inexorably pay for having been chosen by the Eternal One. Having been given the Law and shown the way of righteousness, they must atone not merely for their own trespasses, but in a measure for the trespasses of all humanity. It was hard, but only just. *Noblesse oblige*. Judah had to be the "suffering servant of the Lord" condemned to "bear the sins of many," and to endure the stripes which would bring healing to all mankind. . . .

Thus did the scattered Judean fugitives learn to interpret the shame that had befallen them. With the cunning of sheer genius, they turned their scars into badges of honor. Of course, not all the fugitives did

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that. Most of them probably did not give a hang about such matters. Penned in the fetid towns of Egypt, or ploughing the marshlands of Babylon, those simple, honest, oafish Judeans had enough to do worrying about bread and shelter. It was solely the choice spirits among them who sensed the more grievous want, and it was they who conceived a doctrine that could assuage it.

But though the common folk may not have shared in conceiving that doctrine, they profited by it none the less. It became for their souls what bread was for their bellies; it nourished their pride and made them drunk with hope. For those zealots among the exiles were not content merely to explain away the present shame; their greater concern was with the future glory. They told the people that if they were paying a high price now for being the chosen of the Lord, in time they would receive no less high a reward. Once they had endured their ordeal, then all would be well with them. The Lord would send a *meshiach*, an "Anointed One" to "call them in righteousness"; and then they would be restored to their own land. A scion of the house of David would once more rule over them, and not as a tyrant but as a "shepherd who will feed them." And then their nation, sworn to righteousness and peace, would be set on high as a "light unto the peoples." Men from the ends of the earth would flock after them, "clutching the skirt of him that is a Jew," as Zechariah confidentially prophesied, "and saying: 'We will go

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with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' " In that day Jerusalem would become the center of the world, and its Temple be made a house of prayer for all nations. These Jews who were now outcasts, who were as worms in the dust, they in the fulness of time would, through their God, reign supreme!

### 7

It was sheer megalomania, and as such not unique. Almost every other virile nation since the beginning of history has believed itself divinely chosen. The ancient Egyptians made that boast, and, among others, the Germans and Japanese make it today. Even Americans were prone (before the Depression) to talk of their "manifest destiny" and to think of their land as "God's country." There was therefore nothing extraordinary about the Jews that they should have made a similar boast.

What alone was unique was the situation in which they made it. All other peoples have preened themselves on their influence with Heaven only when they have been prosperous and mighty. But it was otherwise with the Jews. They whipped themselves into megalomania when they were down in the dust. And they could do this because their prophets had given them a new understanding of the nature of Heaven's favor. The Jews were chosen, they believed, not to prosper but to serve. They had a mission: to show the nations of the world the way of righteousness. Therefore they must know

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travail for yet many years to come, for such a mission could not soon be fulfilled. But that very travail was the proof of their election and the guarantee of their eventual triumph. The more they suffered now the more surely were they treading the path to glory!

Modern psychologists have discovered ways of accounting for a notion so fantastic—or at least have invented terms to describe it. They talk of the "masochistic impulse," "delusions of grandeur," and of "compensations" for an "inferiority complex." But the genesis of the belief is beyond the scope of our inquiry; we are concerned here only with its effects. To me it seems clear that in the Jew's stubborn clinging to that belief lies half the answer to the riddle of his survival. (Not the whole answer, as will soon become obvious; but certainly half of it.) Having inverted the reasoning common to all other prideful nations, having made wretchedness rather than success the proof of his superiority, the Jew rendered himself almost imperishable. Only ease and prosperity could undermine his belief in his own importance. And so long as these were not forthcoming, the belief had to endure.

### 8

But a sheer belief is a tenuous thing to cling to. If the vision of the prophets was to remain potent in Jewry, there was need for a ritual to give it body. And this was provided by the priestly lawgivers, the

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"scribes." They were less exalted men than the prophets: organizers rather than visionaries. But for that very reason they were the more valuable at this juncture. They saw the need for a *how* as well as a *why* of survival. Jewry, they felt, must be put into a state of siege to enable it to hold out until the "Anointed One" could bring up the Heavenly forces of relief. And this the scribes sought to do by extending and elaborating the *torah*, the "Law," which had served crudely to demarcate the Hebrews ever since tribal times. Their purpose was plain. They wanted to give body to the cry: "For I the Lord am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, that you should be Mine." Therefore they built up the Torah from a mere sill of primitive taboos to a high rampart of religious rites and moral scruples. When the Babylonian Exile was ended, and a multitude of Jews finally found their way back to the old homeland, that elaborated Torah was made the statute-book of the reborn nation. It sacerdotalized every phase of life for the Jews, and made them conscious at every turn that they were "a kingdom of priests and a holy people." And thus it kept them safe from the encroachments of the Gentiles.

The restored Jewish nation endured for some six hundred years, and during all that time the ramparts of ritual were kept intact. That was because, despite the possession of a homeland, the nation's hold on life was always precarious. Situated at the cross-roads of the

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ancient world, Judea was never safe from invasion. Indeed, during five of those six centuries it was no more than a cowed vassal state. First it had to pay tribute to Persia, then to Greece, and finally to Rome. With foreign armies continually quartered in the land, and foreign traders forever passing through it, the Jews who dwelt there felt anything but secure.

Nor was that all. As the years passed, the Jews so multiplied that their own land was able to contain only a small minority of them. By the first century B.C. as many Jews seem to have been living in Egypt as in Palestine, as many more were settled in Syria, and perhaps twice as many were scattered in other provinces. In all they may have numbered almost four million (approximately one-tenth of the total population of the Roman Empire!) and of these well over three million lived in foreign lands. Unable because of lack of arms to burst into those lands and carve out territories for themselves, they had to dribble into them unobtrusively and hide in the teeming cities. And there they were in constant danger of being swallowed up. Had it not been for the ritual which walled in their lives no matter where they wandered, those millions of émigré Jews would very swiftly have disappeared.

### 9

The ritual at that time had at its core the sacrificial cult conducted by the priests in the Temple on Mount

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Zion. All Jews were expected to make pilgrimage to that shrine thrice each year, and those who could not do so had at least to send regular offerings. From certain indications it would seem that emissaries went to and fro to collect these offerings, and in other ways kept the religious zeal from waning in the scattered Jewish colonies. And, incredibly, Judaism actually thrived. The religion was apparently richer in apocalyptic promises, nobler in moral content, and firmer in social emphasis than the other oriental cults which were then inundating the Roman world; and it not merely held the Jews, but even won converts among the Pagans. There are evidences of a concerted missionary movement at the time. Jews, we are told, "compassed land and sea" to win heathens to the synagogue.

But what hindered the spread of the religion was the very ritual which had until then preserved it. To become a Jew one had to do more than believe in the One God and send dues to the Temple in Jerusalem. One had to submit to circumcision, a painful and irreparable rite; and one had to abide by laws which were elaborately inconvenient. Had those obstacles been removed, Judaism might have enjoyed the triumph later won by its offspring, Christianity. It might in time have become the state religion of the Roman Empire, and perhaps eventually the nominal faith of the entire Occident. And there were those among the Jewish leaders who seem to have coveted such a triumph. They

belonged largely to the aristocratic priesthood and the wealthy trading class: men who had come under the influence of Greek and Roman culture, and who felt it would be a good bargain to gain the world at the price of the Torah. They themselves, we are told, affected indifference to the ritual. Many of them, embarrassed that its primal mark should be seen on them when they were naked in the baths and gymnasia, actually tried to conceal it surgically. . . .

### 10

But there was another party which would not brook such recreancy. Its members were called Pharisees, "Separatists," and they would not waive a jot or tittle of the Torah. Not content with the written law in the canonized "Five Books of Moses," they heaped on it an even more formidable oral law. By means of recondite and usually fantastic "interpretations" they somehow found warrant in the sacred text for all manner of new rites and regulations.

And the misfortunes of war gave the upper hand to these Pharisees. Rome, weary of the incessant rebelliousness of the populace in Palestine, sent out an army under Vespasian and Titus which, after three years of bloody campaigning, finally stormed Jerusalem, demolished its Temple, and put an end to the nation. That catastrophe happened in 70 A.D., and it closed forever the era of the priests. With the destruction of



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the Temple the sacrificial cult had to be abandoned, and the priests lost their function. But the Law remained, and the Pharisees, who had made themselves its guardians and interpreters, had to become the new leaders in Jewry. These Pharisees insisted that the people must live on despite that land and altar had been taken from them. They were still the "chosen" of the Lord, and it was now but a matter of weeks, perhaps of days, before the "Anointed One" came to redeem them. The razing of Jerusalem and the dispersing of its inhabitants plainly proved that the "end of time" was near. And therefore it was more imperative than ever that the Jews should hold out. Temporarily they must make their own hovels their shrines, and their tables their holy altars. And they themselves saying grace over what poor crumbs they had to eat must be as were the priests when they offered fatlings on Mount Zion. They must hallow each act they performed, no matter how humble or trivial. They must hide behind the ramparts of ritual and thus preserve themselves—until the Messiah came.

### 11

But those ramparts had to be looked to vigilantly, for now that the Jews were homeless in the world, the forces of "heathenism" were more menacing than ever. With each new day new dangers arose and new defences had to be thrown up and made secure. There-

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fore the rabbis, the Pharisaic teachers, established "houses of learning" where they could gather with their disciples and add to the ramparts. Unlike the priests, the only reward received by those rabbis was the honor paid them by the people—and of course the merit they stored up in Heaven. Their food and shelter they had to provide for themselves by toiling as artisans or traders. Yet, despite that they were thus hampered, they accomplished prodigious feats. Each succeeding generation added another tower or parapet to the wall. By the end of the second century so many additions had been made that they had to be consolidated in what was called the Mishnah. It was a six-volume compilation of rabbinic law, and though ostensibly entirely based on the enactments in the "Five Books of Moses," it exceeded them in bulk many hundredfold. But the process could not halt there. Later generations of rabbis had to make more additions, and by the beginning of the sixth century a new consolidation had to be effected. This was called the Gemara, and was a sixty-three volume exposition of the Mishnah. The two compilations together formed the Talmud—an impregnable citadel for the Jew to hide in.

But even that did not end the work. Life kept changing for the wandering people, and with each new departure, new safeguards had to be devised. Congregations in different parts of the world wrote to the great rabbis of the day asking what to do in the emergencies

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that confronted them. And the decisions, if based on sound Talmudic precedent, became in time integral part of the Law. Such accretions, however, were of minor significance. At most they were like small bastions on the walls. The walls themselves were established once and for all in the Talmud.

### 12

What those rabbis accomplished can be judged only if one remembers the plight of Jewry during all those centuries. It had neither king nor country, might nor honor. It was scattered everywhere and belonged nowhere: a gypsy people lacking the love of roving which might have made a gypsy life worth living. Always it hungered to be let alone; always it asked only for peace. Yet it had to keep moving—from Palestine to Mesopotamia, from Mesopotamia to Spain or France, from Spain to Turkey, from France to Germany, from Germany to Poland. . . . And in all this wandering the Torah wrought by the rabbis was Israel's one salvation. It united the people no matter where they were scattered. A Jew in medieval times could wander from London to Samarkand, from Aden to Danzig, and always find a synagogue where he could be at home. The liturgy in its essentials was the same everywhere. Morning, afternoon, and evening there were the prescribed "Eighteen Benedictions" (actually nineteen) to be recited standing and in silence; and preceding and

following them the prescribed psalms and prayers to be chanted with heartening gusto. The holy days too were the same everywhere, and the peculiar rites which marked them. There might be slight variations in the way the Hebrew was pronounced, or in the way it was intoned. In Italy the synagogue cantors might be influenced by the Gregorian choirs, and in Persia by the court minstrels. But these were negligible divergences. The moment a Jew entered a synagogue anywhere, he knew he was among his kinsmen.

Nor was that all. The Law not alone united all Jewry, but also set it apart from the rest of the world. It so ritualized the life of every Jew that never for a moment could he forget his Jewishness. He was reminded of it not so much by the opinions he was expected to hold as by the things he was commanded to do. The rabbis were exceedingly astute men, and they realized that thought was like wind, a thing incapable of regulation. Therefore they did not insist on any dogmas. Rationalism, mysticism, free-will, determinism, monism, dualism—such issues the individual could decide for himself. What alone was regimented was a Jew's conduct. From the moment he arose each day, until the moment he returned to sleep, he had to behave, so to speak, Jewishly. Before he took three steps from his couch he was required to wash his hands and utter a prayer. (And it remained the same prayer whether he was a blond high-cheeked Jew living near

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the Baltic, or a brown long-faced Jew settled on the Indian coast.) Before he could break his fast he had to put on the *tephillin*, the phylacteries, and recite the morning service. When he ate he had to be scrupulous as to the nature of the food, for only that which was *kosher*, ritually correct, was not defiling. He was permitted to eat the flesh only of cud-chewing animals with cloven hoofs, and then only if the beast had been ritually slaughtered. Of fish only those with fins and scales were permitted, and of fruits and vegetables only those free of maggots. Furthermore, meat and its products had to be kept severely apart from milk and its products. If a Jew partook of the first, he had to wait at least six hours before partaking of the second. The utensils used for preparing and serving the two types of food might never be interchanged; even the cloths with which they were dried had to be kept apart. And before eating he was required to recite a specific blessing according to the nature of the food, for the blessing for bread was of no avail for wine, and that for vegetables was worthless for fruit. If he partook of two kinds of food it was sufficient if he blessed the more important; but if both were of equal account he had to bless each in turn. If, being a guest, a second portion was offered him, he was not required to repeat the blessing. But if, being in a caravanserai, he sent out for a second portion, he had to recite the blessing over again. . . .

The rest of this volume could be filled, and at least half a dozen more, with such laws governing the daily life of the observant Jew. There were ordinances regulating which shoe should be first removed on retiring (the left), in what places to lay one's clothing (never under the pillow), and in what position to sleep (on the side). The laws concerning a Jew's conduct on the Sabbath fill a whole tractate of the Talmud. He was not permitted to touch fire on that day, or write, or ride. He might not even walk beyond a certain distance. Because it was his day of rest he was not allowed to carry any burden on the Sabbath—not even a handkerchief unless it was tied as a girdle and made part of his dress! Similarly there were all manner of restrictions governing his life on the festivals, especially on Passover when he had to eschew leavened bread and all that might ever have come in contact with it. There were innumerable laws relating to hygiene, particularly for the women. There were laws relating to every circumstance in life, from birth through marriage to death.

Not all these laws were of equal gravity. Indeed many of them were not called "laws" (*dinnim*), but merely "customs" (*minhagim*), and their infraction was held of small consequence. But unless one was versed in such matters it was impossible to distinguish between the two kinds, for—except in the case of the moral injunctions—there was no more rationality behind the "laws" than behind the "customs." The dis-

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inction between them was more one of history than of character, and therefore all who made any pretensions to piety observed both *dinnim* and *minhagim* indiscriminately. They did so because they saw that both served the same holy purpose: to keep them ever-mindful that they were not like other people. They did not care whether there were hygienic or other utilitarian reasons for a regulation. The Jews regarded them all as in the nature of taboos.

And indeed, taboos they were for the most part: sacred rites having and needing no other justification than their mere sacredness. The rabbis who elaborated them had but one thought in mind: to isolate the Jew, for isolation meant preservation. That is why, as Professor Gotthard Deutsch was fond of pointing out, so much of their Law seems based on sheer contrariness. If Christianity takes the Mosaic commands as mere symbols, Judaism is made to read literal meaning into each letter in those commands. If the priests make dogmas the bulwark of their faith, the rabbis lay stress on rites instead. If the Church forbids divorce under almost any circumstances, the Talmud permits it even if the wife has merely burnt her husband's soup! (Tractate *Gittin*, 90a.) One is reminded of Till Eulenspiegel's saying that if one would act like a wise man one should watch the conduct of fools and do the opposite. In a like spirit the rabbis seem to have built up the Law by watching the behaviour of the Gentiles

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and commanding the contrary. Thus they hoped to wall in the Jews, to set them apart as a "peculiar people." A well-established ghetto had to be almost a self-contained world, with its own house of prayer, house of learning, marriage-hall, hospital, bath, slaughter-house, bakery, inn, and burial ground. Such elaborate segregation was necessary because, even if (a very grave *if*) the Gentiles were ready to mingle with the Jews, the Jews dared not mingle with the Gentiles. They dared not do so because every phase of their life was weighted down with ritual.

### 13

It was a heavy burden, and again and again there was effort to throw it off. But throughout much of the past it was borne with docility, even with joy. The Jew was so ill-used by the world, he was so despised and harassed wherever he turned, that paradoxically the added burden of the Law seemed to relieve the horror of his life. For one thing, it gave him the feeling (spurious, no doubt, but none the less effective) that he was better than other men. For another, it so pre-occupied his mind that he had no time left for querulous moping. His existence, otherwise so sordid, so drab, took on the flush of glory because of the ritual in which he swathed it. During the day in the marketplace, or trudging pack on back through the countryside, he had to wear the peaked bonnet and yellow-



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badged cloak of his shame. But before he put them on for the day he could array himself in his own garb, in his prayer-shawl and phylacteries. And, standing before his Lord in those sacred vestments, he could turn his mind toward a glorious morrow and forget the day already here. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!" he could sing in his morning devotions; and singing thus he could fortify himself against the taunts awaiting him in the street.

It was the same when he returned at sundown bespattered and cowed, for then he could go to the synagogue for the evening prayers and become cleansed and restored to pride. Above all when the Sabbath came could he taste of glory, for that was *his* day, his and the Lord's. On Friday afternoon he would hasten home, throw the pack from his shoulder, and prepare to receive the Sabbath "like a bride." He would run to the ghetto bathhouse, run home again in a happy sweat, put on his holiday clothes, and go to the synagogue for the evening prayers. Then, returning home, he would take his seat at the head of the table and look about him with beaming eyes. Everything would be shining with Sabbath cleanliness: the walls, the floor, the white cloth on the table, the silver candlesticks, even the faces of his children. They would file before him, those children, and, laying his hands on the head of each in turn, he would pronounce a benediction. Then, looking toward his wife, he would intone the lovely verses

about the "woman of virtue" which close the Book of Proverbs. "Many daughters have done worthily," he would chant to her, "but thou excellest them all. Favor is false, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." . . .

And, having thus blessed his children and praised his wife, our Jew would turn and drink a cup of wine to the Lord. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe," he would sing, "that Thou hast chosen us and sanctified us above all nations, and in love and favor hast given us Thy holy Sabbath as an inheritance." . . . Then, having passed the cup to the others, and given them bread also, he would fall to the Sabbath repast. There would be fish, succulent fish stewed in spices, and there would be fresh white bread to dip into the rich sauce. Perhaps, if the week's earnings were not too meagre, there would be other viands as well. Even if there were not, our Jew would be content, for no matter how little there was, it was more than he had on other days.

Having eaten, he would lean back, loose his girdle, and begin loudly to say Grace. He would rehearse all the wonders that God had done for his people: how He had brought them forth from Egypt, and been with them ever since. "The Lord hath done great things for us," he would sing with the Psalmist: "therefore we greatly rejoice. . . . Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose trust the Lord is. I have

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been young and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging for bread. . . .”

Thus would he chant, swaying to and fro—and he would believe the words! He would believe them not simply because he had been commanded to do so, but because he himself *wanted* to believe. Those glowing phrases and glittering promises, those quavering protestations that God was on his side—they alone made life endurable for the poor man. Reft of them he was what the townsfolk called him: an accursed dog of a Jew. But cherishing them, draping himself in their bright assurances, he became a prince, a king. He felt literally like a king as he sat there in the dying light of the candle-flames and sang of God’s kindness to Israel. And, to paraphrase a passage in Heine, were the real king of the land to enter the hovel at that moment, with all his chamberlains, seneschals, lords, and yeomen, and were he to say: “Jew, I feel moved to generosity this night—tell me what I, the King, can do for you”; then would our householder blandly reply: “But one thing, Sire—trim me those candles!”

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## CHAPTER TWO

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"TRIM me those candles," our Jew might ask a king who came to visit him on the Sabbath eve: and in the request he would reveal not alone the strength but also the weakness of his cult. For without the world of defilement to serve as its foil, that cult stultified itself. The Jew could keep the Law only so long as the non-Jew was there to save him from breaking it. He had to have the Gentile at hand to serve him on the Sabbath day—and also to plague him the whole week long. Otherwise the Jew had neither means nor incentive to observe his exacting ritual. The aim of that ritual was to preserve him as a Jew, and his preservation was imperative because he believed himself to be God's witness on earth. But a witness loses his function once his testimony has been accepted; he has reason to persevere only so long as he and his word are scorned. Therefore, without the Gentile to harass him, the Jew's ritual became pointless, for his whole existence became pointless.

The ancient rabbis with a characteristic pun declared that *Ṣinai* (the Mosaic Law) provoked the world's

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*sinah* (hatred). But even more truly might they have said that *sinah* preserved *Sinai*. Nothing is more constant in the history of the Jew than the dependence of his piety on the Gentile's hostility. At the least lull in the siege he begins to clamber over his battlements and venture out into the world; and only when the attack is renewed does he flee back to his citadel. This has happened not once but repeatedly. There has always been an ebb and flow in Jewish seclusiveness; and always it has corresponded to an ebb and flow in Gentile antipathy.

### 2

See for instance what happened in Jewry when Pagan libertarianism gave way to Christian fanaticism. At the beginning of the first century there was, as we have already learnt, widespread effort at assimilation on the part of the Jews who had come under Roman influence. It was thwarted in Palestine by the ferocity with which the Romans stamped out the rebellion there in the year 70. But elsewhere the drift toward assimilation continued. In Egypt, Greece, and the other provinces, and especially in Rome itself, the Jews were accorded, if not real comradeship, at least fair tolerance; and as a consequence they tended to hold themselves less and less aloof. We can tell that from the inscriptions on their tombstones. One of the earliest that have come down to us, an Italian stone dating

apparently from the first century, reads: *Benus filia rebbetis Abundanti*, "Venus, the daughter of Rabbi Abundantius." Apparently the Jews, though still barbarous Latinists, had already begun to prefer that language to Hebrew for their memorials. Moreover, they had already become so influenced by their environment that even a rabbi could name his daughter Venus!

And this process of paganization continued. In the Monteverde catacomb, the oldest in Rome, many of the inscriptions are still in Hebrew and the symbols are all traditional. The palm-branch, the citron, the candelabra, the oil-lamp: these and their like are ubiquitous. But in the Vigna Randanini catacomb, which dates from a later generation, almost no Hebrew is to be seen: it is supplanted by Latin. And among the symbols one actually finds cupids, and the winged Pegasus!

But then came Constantine and the triumph of Christianity. The Jews, until then full citizens of the Empire, suddenly discovered themselves outcasts. Their religion, until then freely tolerated, was now officially branded "contemptible," "bestial," and "nefarious." Moreover, they were forbidden under pain of death to intermarry with Christians. That brought them to with a jolt. They saw they could no longer drift: they had either to plunge into the flooding stream of Christendom or else flee back to the fastness of their own Law. How many plunged, we do not know. In all likelihood they were numerous, especially among the rich and the

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ambitious in Jewry. But the rest, perhaps the majority, recoiled. They ran for safety to their old citadel and fell to buttressing its walls. And never again for an age did they dare venture from it. From the fourth century onward the Jewish tombstones in Italy are once more all inscribed in Hebrew. . . .

### 3

That sort of thing happened over and over again: in Spain when the Visigoths were converted from Arianism to Catholicism; in Mesopotamia when the enlightened Arabs were supplanted by the Seljuk Turks; in North Africa when the Moors fell prey to Almohadan fanaticism; in Spain after the Moslems were expelled by the infidel-hating Christians; throughout Western Europe when the Black Death filled the populace with mad terror; in Poland after the Cossacks ploughed the land with fire in 1648. . . . Wherever the light of tolerance has waxed we Jews have crawled out of our fastness; but the moment it has waned, back we have fled and deeper in our walls have we buried ourselves. Therefore it is only half the truth to say that the Jew has persisted because of his own stubborn will to live. In addition there has been the Gentile's passion not to let him die.

That passion has not been constant, of course. For example in Egypt in the early centuries of the present era there was relatively little hostility shown the Jews—

and as a consequence their numbers swiftly dwindled there. In the days of Philo we hear of a million Jews living in Egypt; but three hundred years later hardly a sign of them is left in the land. Similarly in Italy, where the Jews suffered far less persecution than anywhere else in Christendom during the Middle Ages, many hundreds of thousands of them seem to have become absorbed in the course of the centuries. To them it was the "land of the Lord's dew"—*i-tal-yah* could be thus punned on in Hebrew—and apparently that is why when the modern era dawned no more than thirty thousand of them were left in the whole country.

Even in the less enlightened regions there has always been a measure of absorption. Otherwise how are we to account for the enormous falling off in the Jewish population toward the end of the Middle Ages? In the year 1600 they could have numbered hardly half-a-million in all of Europe—considerably fewer than were to be found in Castile alone four hundred years earlier. And though part of the loss was due to massacre and privation, more must have been due to conversion. But it is significant that only so long as the converts came one by one was the Gentile world willing to absorb them. The moment their procession into the Church turned from a trickle to a flood, the moment they came *en masse*, the Christians repulsed them. They were ready enough then to give the Jews baptism—but not fellowship. Apparently something within the



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Christian, perhaps a conditioned xenophobia, made him incapable of swallowing more than one Jew at a time. Whenever the children of Abraham tried to come over in a multitude, all their subtle "foreignness" became obvious, and the inner door was closed in their face. Having been baptized, they had to remain Christians—but they could not become Gentiles. Despite their apostasy they had to remain what they had always been—Jews.

### 4

Consider what happened in Spain after the Christians expelled the Moors. It is said that the Jews in the Peninsula numbered almost a million at the time, and they were a dominant element in the economic and cultural life. Under the Moors they had wandered far toward assimilation, and though they had somewhat retreated since then, they were still eager to mingle with the people around them. But the Christians would not permit it. By the year 1250 they were already compelling the Jew to wear a yellow badge on his cloak so that he might be avoided in the streets; and they were forbidding him to live under one roof with Christians, or eat or drink with them, or use the same bathhouse. The fanatical Spanish clerics were responsible for these measures, and had they had their way then (as at last they did have it in 1492) they would have driven all Jews right out of the land. But the kings balked at

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that, for they had need of the Jews. That was because they had incessant need of ready funds, and (since the Church prohibited the lending of money at interest, and since no one would lend money without interest) the Jews, who were not bound by Church law, were indispensable. They were the tolerated bootleggers of the age, supplying gold to a world forbidden to deal in it. They became the bankers for the royal fisc, advancing huge sums to the king and then getting them back in the form of taxes which they themselves were often empowered to gather from the people. Needless to add, though the Jews thus performed an essential function in the economic life of the land, they were not thanked for it. On the contrary, like Judas without whose dastard act there could have been no Christian salvation, they were never forgiven for their service.

Yet somehow they were able to endure. Though exploited by the rulers and harried by the populace, they even managed in an unwholesome way to thrive. Spiritually they sank almost to the level of their oppressors. They no longer dared to indulge in thinking as had their fathers in the "Golden Age" under the Moors; instead they revelled in rankest credulity. Philosophy with its libertarian tendencies they shunned; mysticism became their highest interest. The learned went groping for truth in the dark jungle of the Kabala, while the plain folk grovelled in demon-haunted superstition. Walled out by Gentile hostility, they walled

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themselves in with their pride of race. As in Mesopotamia after the Seljuks came there, and in Palestine after the Romans befell the land, the Jews hid behind their ramparts of ritual and waited for the Messiah to come.

And thus they managed to hold out until at last the Christian populace lost patience, and its smoldering hate flared up in murder. Virgin Spain, as Marvin Lowenthal has put it, showed herself one of the Foolish Virgins—for though her lamp was filled, it contained blood, not oil. Incited by the clergy, a mob stormed the Jewish section of Seville on Ash Wednesday in 1391, and after setting fire to the houses, slaughtered four thousand of the inhabitants. Soon mobs broke loose in the neighboring cities, and before the summer was out every Jewish quarter in the land had suffered its night of terror. Only one way of escape was open to the Jews, and that was through the door of the Church. And many, quailing before the alternative of a violent death, hastened to take that way. If, as is estimated, only fifty thousand Jews lost their lives in that holocaust, it was solely because hundreds of thousands more saved themselves by apostasy.

But it was only their lives they saved. Though now professing Christians, they were still loathed by the populace. Apparently there was a stigma on them which not even baptism could remove. In the eyes of the law, it is true, they were the equals of all the rest

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of the "faithful"; but in the eyes of men they were still a people apart. Shunned by those who now described themselves as *Christianos viejos*, "Old Christians," the converts were forced to live in their own quarters, and to marry largely among themselves. Nor was this segregation soon relaxed. Even three generations later the descendants of those converts were still regarded as aliens, and subjected to outrages. One of the worst of these occurred in Cordova in 1473, and cost the lives of several hundred New Christians. One of the survivors, a poet named Antonio de Moreno, could not refrain from sardonic comment when describing the event. Had we remained Jews in 1391, he wrote, then we might at once have attained the peace of death. Instead we turned Christians and suffered the torments of life—only to be slain, still as Jews, eighty-two years later!

It was a warning to those who had held out until then—so potent a warning that when, a few years later, these stubborn ones were all peremptorily ordered to turn Christian or leave the land, the vast majority of them chose to leave. It is estimated that when that order was issued, in 1492, only fifty thousand of all the Jews that were left in Spain succumbed to baptism. The rest, perhaps two hundred thousand in all, gathered up what they could of their portable belongings and ran away.

At least half of them sought refuge in the neighboring kingdom of Portugal, and found it there—for five

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years. Then once again they were ordered to accept baptism or move on; and when they showed signs of again preferring flight, they were stopped this time. Only a handful succeeded in escaping; the rest were baptized by force and then forbidden under the direst penalties to try to get away. And thus was Judaism officially rooted out of the entire Iberian Peninsula. Thenceforth for almost four hundred years no synagogue was permitted anywhere in the region, and no observer of the Mosaic Law was tolerated.

### 5

But though Judaism was thus destroyed in Spain and Portugal, a Jewry persisted there. True, it did not proclaim itself a Jewry. On the contrary, in season and out it loudly protested that it was a part of Christendom. But the protestations were of little avail. The converts from Judaism, whether "voluntary" as in Spain or enforced as in Portugal, were still regarded as aliens. Not in the eyes of the law, of course; but, for that very reason, all the more so in the eyes of the populace. For these erstwhile Jews, no longer hindered by legal restrictions, bobbed at once to the surface, like so many corks suddenly freed of the weight that had held them down. Some of them became spectacularly rich and powerful, for their wits had been sharpened in the long course of their oppressed existence, and they were better equipped than the Old Christians to advance in com-

merce and politics. And this made them the more loathsome to the Old Christians. *Marranos*, they were called, "swine"—and like swine were they treated.

Nothing sheds more light on the mystery of the Jew's survival than the fate of those *Marranos*. Mr. Cecil Roth has recently published a history of the group, and it is one of the most fantastic and heart-rending documents in all of historical literature. Those *Marranos* had no desire to remain a race apart. Indeed, they did all in their power, at least after the first generation, to identify themselves completely with the people around them. They adopted the names of those people, the oldest and most honorable names, or else the most pious. They called themselves *Firme-Fé* ("Firm-faith"), or *Espírito-Santo* ("Holy Ghost"), or *Homem-Christo* ("Man-Christ"). They cultivated the sanctimonious phrases of the Old Christians, and also their oaths, their follies, their vices. They attended mass with exemplary piety, and were obtrusively generous to the Church. They bought benefices for their sons and made nuns of their daughters. In the religious processions they sang the loudest and carried the costliest banners. Whatever they may have thought in their hearts, or practiced in the secrecy of their homes, outwardly they were the most fervent of Christians. Inwardly, too, the majority of them seem to have grown fervent as the memory of their ancestral faith waned. Those hapless creatures took no pride in their past. On the contrary,

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they were through and through ashamed of it, and groaned that it be forgotten.

But their groans were in vain. The more they tried to lose themselves in the mob, the more they remained distinctive. The very aliases they assumed became in time a mark of their identity. If a man bore a name like Costa, Cardozo, Mendes, Rodrigues, Pereira, Souza, Silva, or Cruz—once the most honorable appellations on the Peninsula—it was taken almost for granted that he was a New Christian. Even if he succeeded in negotiating an alliance with an Old Christian family, his offspring still could not escape the stigma. The children of such alliances were described as "half New Christians," and the grandchildren as "quarter New Christians," or "three-quarter New Christians." As such they were discriminated against not alone socially, but to a degree even economically. With rare exceptions only those who could prove the *limpieza*, the "purity," of their family strain, could hold commissions in the army, or occupy the highest state offices. And this acted as a stubborn deterrent to intermarriage, especially in the middle-class, to which most of the New Christians belonged. They had to keep to themselves, no longer "dogs," as in the days before their conversion, but still Marranos, "swine." They might be free now to achieve fame, but not honor; they could attain wealth, but not peace.

And with the passing of time their plight grew only

worse. Before long there was widespread agitation that the obloquy attached to these New Christians be sanctioned and enforced by law. In 1562 the bishops of Portugal actually petitioned that all the Marranos be made to wear a special badge on their clothes and live in segregated quarters! True, the petition was rejected; but that is less significant than the fact that almost seventy years after the Jews had been made Christians there was this outcry to treat their descendants as though they were still Jews. As late as 1630 we read of riots in the universities to keep the too numerous Marrano students from attending classes, and to drive the too numerous Marrano professors from the faculties. The great University of Coimbra had to be closed for a time owing to the fury of the agitation.

### 6

Nor did the hostility exhaust itself in mere agitation. Again and again there were riots against the New Christians, and when these occurred there was no escape for the victims—as there had been for their forefathers—through eleventh-hour baptism. Having been already baptized at birth, there was nothing left for them save extreme unction. . . .

And there were those among the Marranos who almost welcomed death, for in such circumstances life was beyond bearing. Social ostracism and occasional violence were not all that they were subjected to. In



addition there was the terror of the Inquisition. No matter how orthodox a New Christian might be in his faith, or how pious in his works, he could never feel safe from molestation by the Holy Office. Any disgruntled servant or malevolent neighbor might inform against him, and though the charge were no more than that he abstained from eating pork, or spread clean linen on Saturday, it was enough, if substantiated, to get him haled before the Inquisitors. He would not be confronted with his accusers, or even informed of the charge. Instead he would be urged to confess. And if he insisted he had nothing to confess, torture would be resorted to. His hands would be tied behind him and lifted inch by inch until the joints cracked and he went delirious with pain. Or a cloth would be thrust down his throat and water poured into it drop by drop until he turned blue from suffocation. And all the time the judges would stand by and keep telling him to confess. If the victim persisted in protesting his innocence, he would be taken back to his cell and left to writhe there several days until his lacerated body began to heal stiffly; and then he would be brought back to the torture-chamber and once more urged with the aid of rack and screws to confess. Verbatim records of such sessions have come down to us—H. C. Lea quotes from them at length in his monumental work on the Spanish Inquisition—and were it not that they were written by the judges themselves, we should not believe them true.

They read like the hellish imaginings of one insane. Rare was the man, and rarer still the woman or child, who could hold out for long against the cold sadism of those Inquisitors. Usually the victims broke down at last and began to babble incoherently, confessing themselves guilty of the most preposterous heresies. They would be ready by then to confess anything, everything, in order to win respite from the torture. And thereupon, being granted compassion because of their penitence, they would perhaps get off with no more than the confiscation of all their possessions and a public humiliation in the cathedral square.

One's wealth was no insurance against such persecution. On the contrary, more often it was a bait, for all that was confiscated accrued to the Holy Office, and its members were not above avarice. But at the same time poverty was no insurance, for the Inquisitors were fanatical even more than they were avaricious. They were a brutal, pitiless, foully sadistic crew; but according to their lights they were just. And for that very reason they were the more menacing.

### 7

There was but one certain insurance against falling into the clutches of the heresy-hunters, and that was flight. But it had to be flight to a foreign land, for the Holy Office had its spies and dungeons in every Spanish or Portuguese colony from Goa in India to Mexico in

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the New World. A New Christian was safe from accusation of heresy only if he fled to some Protestant or Moslem land—and that he was usually reluctant to do. In the first place, he felt rooted where he now dwelt: he had his livelihood there, spoke the language, knew the ways, and had been reared in the native religion. In the second place, even if he was willing to sever those ties, the law forbade him to leave. Finally, even if he could manage to smuggle himself out, there was still left the problem of what might await him elsewhere. In Germany he would be counted a Catholic and in North Africa or Turkey he would be an infidel: in either case a person to be hated and oppressed. Of course, if he went to Holland, whither many of his brethren had already fled, he could revert to Judaism; but that was a step he was not always ready to take. The notion that all the New Christians were really Jews at heart and yearned to say so openly, is not true. Actually the majority of them, after the second or third generation, were confirmed Catholics. It is true that very many of the New Christians continued to cherish peculiar customs learnt from their parents—for instance, lighting a candle on Friday night—but these were little more than family superstitions. Save for such eccentricities, most of the New Christians were devoutly orthodox folk who had as great a horror of heresy or infidelism as any Dominican friar.

Yet if after fleeing they refused to revert to Judaism,

they were fated nevertheless to be called Jews. An historic incident in England in the time of Queen Elizabeth throws striking light on the common attitude towards these Marrano fugitives. The Queen's physician was a certain Roderigo Lopez who had been born in Portugal some thirty years after the General Conversion. He must therefore have been reared a Christian, and he could hardly have relapsed in later life or he would not have been permitted to remain in England. (All Jews had been expelled from that country by Edward I in 1290, and none were allowed to return until Cromwell came into power almost four hundred years later.) Yet the man was always referred to (behind his back) as "Lopez the Jew," and accused of attaining his wealth and prominence by what the chronicler Gabriel Harvey describes as "a kind of Jewish practis." As might be expected, this Lopez came to no good end. After many years of court intrigue against him he was finally arrested on the charge of conspiring to poison the Queen, and the trial which ensued was one of the sensations of the period. (Shakespeare is said to have written his "Merchant of Venice" in order to capitalize on the furor aroused by that trial.) Though there was little evidence to condemn Lopez, there was more than enough prejudice. "He is a murdering villain and Jewish doctor," thundered the solicitor-general in the courtroom; "he is worse than Judas himself." And the judges could not but be swayed by such language. The poor old man—

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he was already seventy—kept protesting his innocence to the last. A contemporary chronicler tells us that even when Lopez was already on the scaffold, he kept crying aloud that “he loved the queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ—the which [the chronicler adds] coming from a man of the Jewish profession, moved no small laughter in the standers-by.” . . .

There you have it! A man who was born and reared a Christian and who proclaimed his love of Christ even at the moment of death, is still a man of “the Jewish profession” so far as the Gentiles are concerned. . . . It was such experiences that kept most of the Marranos from leaving the Peninsula. They knew that no matter where they fled, their infamy would cling to them. They were accursed—tainted indelibly by their father’s father’s birth. So in despair they remained where they were, and hoped that time and sedulous effort would eventually wear away their identity. Gold too was of some help in that direction. With the progressive impoverishment of the noble Old Christian families it was possible for the richer Marranos to buy their way into the higher caste. And by sustained exogamy they finally so diluted their abominated strain that they were able to “pass over” completely.

### 8

But always there were those left who could not breed themselves out. Perhaps it was because they did not wish to; but one may well doubt that. It is true that

many did take a perverse pride in their origin, boasting in the secrecy of their own family circles that they were *judeus dos quatro castados*, "Jews on four sides." And though they had long forgotten most of the Jewish ritual, such folk still clung stubbornly to certain peculiar usages which had come down to them. But whether this was out of love of their heritage or sheer spite of the world, it is hard to say. In all likelihood both motives were involved.

One must realize that these people were true products of their environment, and superstition was so to speak bred in their very bones. They believed that a magic potency inhered in these old family customs, and, despite the danger, they could not bring themselves to give them up. Some of the more daring—and often the more intelligent—went so far as to organize secret conventicles for the practice of their heresies. For instance in 1619, well over a century after the General Conversion, the discovery was made that a number of the leading figures in the University of Coimbra were regularly attending what was virtually a synagogue. The congregation included several professors, half a dozen canons, as many eminent physicians and jurists, and a number of priests! None of them seems to have had any sure knowledge of the traditional ritual, and the services they held each Sabbath consisted almost entirely of the monotonous repetition of a remembered Hebrew phrase or two, and lengthy readings from the

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Vulgate translation of the Psalms. That men with so much to lose by exposure should have engaged in such an activity is explicable on only one score. It was the age of the Reformation, when disaffection with the Roman Church was rife everywhere. In Northern Europe it had already led to open revolt, but in the south it had never advanced beyond the stage of underground agitation. And these clandestine gatherings among the New Christians may have been part of that agitation.

But to speak of such secret sodalities as Jewish congregations would be to exaggerate. More truly they were not so much Jewish as anti-Catholic. And their existence is perhaps chiefly attributable to the fact that the New Christians, even when their "newness" was already a century old, were still regarded as aliens. They were *in* the Catholic world, but not *of* it. Even "half" or "quarter" New Christians—as were, for instance, the leader and many of the members of that Coimbra group—did not escape all manner of slights and discriminations. Therefore they were so prone to contumacy. It was their one way of venting resentment against an order which held them fast and yet rejected them.

### 9

Throughout the seventeenth century that resentment continued, and throughout the eighteenth, and even the

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nineteenth. For the legal distinction between Old and New Christians persisted, at least in Spain, until 1860—almost five hundred years after it was first established! And the social distinction persisted even longer; indeed, it exists to this very day in certain parts of the Peninsula. In Portugal the word *judeu* has never ceased to be a common epithet. (It was consistently thrown in the teeth of Alfonso Costa, who was one of the leaders in the movement which led to the overthrow of the Portuguese monarchy in 1910.) True, it has now become largely an indiscriminate term of abuse—but not entirely so. If you tell a Portuguese lady that she is a *tipo de judia*, a “Jewish type,” she will feel enormously flattered, for in her world that is a compliment. But if you ask her if she is a *judia*, her eyes will flame with anger, for that word still carries a sting. Only those suspected to be of New Christian descent are supposed to be called by that foul name—and then only behind their backs. . . .

In 1925 there appeared a little book entitled *Os Christãos-Novos em Portugal no século XX*, written by one Samuel Schwarz, a Polish Jewish engineer established at Lisbon. In it he told how, on a business trip to the mining country in northern Portugal in 1917, one of the inhabitants, desirous of obtaining his patronage, warned him pointedly against having any dealings with a certain competitor. When asked for the reason, the villager replied: “It is enough for me to tell you



that the man is a Jew!" Schwarz, utterly astounded, went to the person of whom this had been said, and asked if it was true; and the latter admitted the charge. He hastened to add, however, that he had long drifted from the other "Jews" in the community, and had even married out of the group. But on learning the stranger's sympathies, he gladly introduced him to certain of his former co-religionists, whispering to them confidentially: "*E' dos nossos*" (He is one of us). These others, however, were suspicious, for they could not believe there were Jews in foreign parts. Besides, Schwarz was altogether ignorant of the rites and spells which to them were the whole of the religion. They shook their heads when he told them that Hebrew was the proper language of prayer for Jews; they had never heard of Hebrew. And when he persisted in his claim, an old crone, apparently the priestess of the cult, skeptically asked him to recite a prayer in this supposedly holy tongue. Whereupon he recited the *Shema*, the traditional Jewish confession of faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One!" Hearing him pronounce the formula, the old woman began to tremble and cover her eyes with her hands, for she recognized one of the words. "*E' realmente judeu,*" she cried. "He is indeed a Jew, for he knows the name of *Adonai* [Lord]!" And therewith the stranger was accepted as one of the sect, and made privy to its secrets.

Others have since followed the trail of that engineer,

among them Mr. Cecil Roth, to whose excellent *History of the Marranos* I have already referred. They have discovered nests of these crypto-Jews throughout the northern provinces of Portugal, especially in the more sequestered townships. There these sectarians have been living for centuries, to all outward appearance good orthodox Catholics, yet in their hearts—and in the eyes of their more knowing neighbors—contumacious Jews. Until 1910, when the republic was established and religious liberty was proclaimed, they all resorted to the parish priests for baptism, marriage, and burial, and went to mass quite regularly. But all the while they continued to observe their own heretical practices. Exceedingly little of the ancestral Jewish ritual has come down to them, and that little in pathetically distorted form. What few Hebrew words and phrases they know—chiefly *Adonai* (Lord), *Saquina* (Shekinah), and *Malcolares Cobrado* (properly *melo kol ha'aretz k'vodo*, meaning "the earth is full of His glory")—they imagine to be Latin, and they recite them almost as spells. The rest of their fragmentary liturgy is in Portuguese, and bears only the faintest resemblance to the synagogal prayers. These New Christians have made saints of certain of their forefathers who were martyred by the Inquisition, and they pray to them for intercession much as do the Old Christians to the Catholic saints. They still observe the Sabbath, though only by kindling a light which in

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some regions they keep carefully hidden inside a pitcher. And they still gather for prayers on the Day of Atonement, Passover, and one or two other holy days. Long unable to keep the dietary laws, they have forgotten most of them; but they still abstain from eating pork (and every other kind of meat!) on the Sabbath and other festivals. But all these things they do in great secrecy, for, though the Inquisition has long been abolished, these people are still afraid to worship in the open. Indeed they have come to believe that secrecy is a cardinal element in their religion, and that without it all the rites lose their efficacy.

Concerted efforts are being made by Jews from other parts of the world to restore these Marranos to their Jewish heritage; but the efforts are meeting with very limited success. Open synagogues have very recently been established in certain of the settlements, and tracts are being circulated to acquaint the people with the rudiments of the orthodox Jewish faith. But many of the New Christians—they still retain that name—refuse to be won over. They contend that they and they alone are the real Jews, and that the so-called Jews in the rest of the world must conform to their Marrano ritual if they would be counted true worshippers of *Adonai*. The majority, however—and this I know from first-hand inquiry—are less insistent on the superior sanctity of their cult. Indeed, now that they have learnt they have nothing more to fear on account of their identity,

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they have not merely ceased to try to conceal it, but actually show signs of giving it up altogether! To quote Cecil Roth: "With the decline of the former prejudice against the New Christians, the forces of assimilation are beginning to make themselves felt to a degree hardly paralleled even in the age of persecution."\* And Samuel Schwarz writes: "After but fifteen years of Republican rule, rites which persisted through centuries of persecution . . . face the certainty of soon passing into oblivion."†

Nothing could more bluntly point the moral of this whole story than that ironic *dénouement*. If these descendants of Jews remained Jews all through those centuries it was obviously not because they wanted to do so, but because they could not help it. Try all they might, they could not wear out the "newness" of their Christianity. So in unconscious spite they made a virtue of necessity, and made a secret boast of their public shame. But now that their shame has waned, their boasting ceases. No longer driven to live a lie, they are now ceasing both to lie and to live. True, they are not dead yet. And the present influx of Jews from Nazi-ridden Germany may so revive old prejudices in Spain and Portugal as to keep those Marranos from ever dying. But failing such a recrudescence, they are doomed. Two generations of adequate tolerance in those lands, and that which fifteen generations of in-

\* *History of the Marranos*, 1932, page 375.

† "The Crypto-Jews of Portugal," *Menorah Journal*, v. 12, p. 148.

tolerance could not do, will at last have been accomplished. . . .

### 10

The career of those Marranos is altogether fantastic; but even more fantastic is the fact that such a career has its many parallels in our history. There was a whole population of Christianized Jews that lingered on in the neighborhood of Naples from the thirteenth century until well into the sixteenth. They were known as the *Neofiti*, and eventually died out—but not because of persecution. On the contrary, it seems to have been toleration that destroyed them, the toleration which came with the Renaissance. Spain and Portugal were only remotely influenced by that liberalizing movement; but Italy was revolutionized by it. As a consequence a process prolonged in the Iberian lands until the twentieth century was completed in Italy four hundred years earlier.

If further proof of this contention be needed, one need only look at what has happened to such groups of converted Jews in other parts of the world. For instance, in the heart of the Sahara there is a people called the *Daggatuns* who are the descendants of Jews forcibly converted to Islam at some unknown date. So far as one can tell they are as distinctive today as they were when first torn from their ancestral stock, and, in that backward environment, promise to remain as dis-

tinative for centuries to come. Similarly there are the *Dönme* in Turkey, the *Jedidini* in Persia, the *G'did-al-Islam* in Khorasan, and the *Tschola* in Bokhara. The religion professed by all these groups is Islam, and their members are, to a stranger, not at all distinguishable from the peoples in whose midst they live. Yet they remain separate. They are *in* the Moslem world, but not *of* it. And in each instance it is clear that the segregation persists because of external pressure rather than internal wilfulness. The world in which those pariah castes drag out their existence is slow to forgive and slower still to forget. And so long as that world endures, so long must those castes persist.

Perhaps that is why local revolutionary movements usually find their most fervent supporters among the members of those depressed groups. So many of the leaders in the movement to establish the Portuguese Republic in 1910 were of Marrano origin, that the term *judeu* came to be applied to every anti-monarchist. In a like way many of the most zealous agitators in the Young Turk movement of 1913 were drawn from the *Dönme*. One of the leaders in that movement was Djavid Bey, who was given the portfolio (apparently as appropriate for a *Dönme* as for a professing Jew) of Minister of Finance when the old despotism was overthrown. The present dictator, Kemal Pasha, is said to be likewise of *Dönme* stock; and even if this be untrue, certainly his radical innovations are heartily

supported by that stock. For innovations bring with them a chance of escape for those Jewish Moslems.

### 11

It may be argued, however, that external pressure has not been solely responsible for the survival of these groups. We have already seen how a remnant of the New Christians in Portugal did, despite all the dangers involved, cling with stiff-necked obstinacy to their ancestral rites. Similarly the Dönme, though outwardly Mohammedan, have always secretly practiced a distorted form of Judaism. They became Moslems in the seventeenth century when Sabbatai Zevi, the "Messiah" in whom they believed, was forced by the Turks to embrace Islam. And most of the Dönme still believe in Sabbatai Zevi, and still await his return. Every Sabbath day they send a woman and her children to the seashore to enquire whether their Messiah's caravel has yet been sighted; and every evening the elders scan the horizon for a sign of it. Seemingly these people have not become swallowed up by the Moslems because they themselves have refused to let themselves be swallowed up. And in greater or less degree that might be said of all the other groups I have mentioned.

But there remains at least one instance of a group which is ostracised as Jewish despite that its members are not in any remotest sense believers in Judaism. On the Spanish island of Majorca all the Jews were forcibly

baptized in 1435. They were, however, merely baptized then, not really converted. As on the mainland, they and many of their descendants continued for years to practice their ancestral faith in secret. But in so small a place as Majorca it was less easy to keep the secret, and the local Inquisition was able to slake its thirst for heretical blood to the point (almost) of satiety. During two hundred and fifty years there were periodic raids and public executions, and finally in 1691 the Holy Office, after having confiscated almost the entire wealth of the Marrano colony, treated itself to an orgy which literally burnt out every last vestige of heresy. Thereafter only one case of suspected "Judaizing" was ever discovered on the island, and in that instance the accused was an immigrant Marrano from Italy. Apparently the native New Christians became impeccable in their orthodoxy, accepting the Catholic faith and practicing its works without reservation or stint.

Yet they were still not accepted by the other Christians. They were called *Chuetas*, the local word for "swine," or else *Individuons de la Calle*, which might be translated "ghetto folk." For a ghetto folk they did remain. They were forced to live in a segregated quarter in the city of Palma, and allowed to marry only among themselves. "In vain," writes Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, "did they recite their prayers in loud voices in their homes so that the passerby might hear; in vain did they cook their food in the windows so that all



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should see that they ate pork. The traditional barriers could not be overcome. The Catholic Church was cruel and harsh, repaying their piety with disdain and repulsion." The sons of the Chuetas who desired to become priests found no room in the seminary. The convents closed their doors against every novice coming from "the street." They were all seated apart like "untouchables" at public worship, and even buried in a special corner of the cemeteries. They were excluded from all public office and from all honored professions. They could not even join the artisan guilds.

And this ostracism, instituted at the time of the forced conversion in 1435, was enforced by legal enactments for three hundred and fifty years! Not until 1782 were these people permitted even by law to dwell outside their wretched *calle*; and even then they were not able to do so because of local prejudice. The Old Christians refused to rent them houses in any other part of the city, or elsewhere on the island; nor would they permit them to engage in any occupation save that of gold-smithing. And this condition continues in great measure *to this day!*

One of Ibáñez's novels, *The Dead Command*, deals at length with this monstrous situation. When I first read the book—it appeared in English in 1919—I thought it a work of cheaply conceived melodrama. It was impossible for me to believe that the situation Ibáñez described could be even remotely real. But I

have since been in Majorca and seen for myself. I have sat with those Chuetas in their little jewelry shops on the dark and narrow Calle de la Platería, and I have tried to draw them out in conversation. Sustained inbreeding during all these centuries has endowed them with traits which are "Jewish" to the point of caricature. Yet so far as I could discover, and so far as I have been able to learn from any other traveller who has been in their midst, they are all blankly ignorant of Judaism. For five hundred years now they have been professing Christians, and during at least the last two hundred and fifty they have been devout ones. Yet there they are, several thousand in all, as distinct from the rest of the population as though they were recent immigrants. They are still the butt of ridicule in Palma, and even the clerics, whose most pious supporters they are, continue to treat them with contempt. After fifteen generations of going to mass and invoking the saints, they are still what their ancestors were—a pariah folk.

"When will it all end?" I asked an old Chueta who had been telling me of the slights his people are still made to endure.

"Aï!" he sighed, shrugging his shoulders and extending his hands. "*Solo la virgen lo sabe!*—only the Virgin knows that!" . . .

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SECLUSION WANES

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THERE are Chuetas all over the world today, Chuetas in spirit if not in name. One finds them in every center of commerce, and seat of culture—Jews who are Jews only because they are known not to be Gentiles. To be sure, relatively few of these profess to be Christians, and fewer still are devoutly such. But all without exception have strayed far from Judaism—and would, if only they could, stray from Jewry too. One thing alone keeps them from losing themselves in the world: it is that the world always finds them out.

From the beginning there has been such a class in Israel; but only within the last century has it grown so numerous. Four generations ago there was hardly a Jew alive who was not herded behind the ramparts of the Holy Law. That was because the world outside was still dark and menacing, and a Jew was mortally afraid to go abroad in it. But with the revolutions at the close of the eighteenth century, enlightenment began to spread over the earth. The ghetto walls were torn down in one land after another, and more and more of the

legal disabilities were removed from the Jews. The process of emancipation was slow and unsteady; but it continued. By the close of the nineteenth century it had swept all the western lands, and before the reaction set in after the Great War, it showed signs of soon sweeping the whole earth.

And as swift as this change came about in the Gentile world, so swift came the change within Jewry. As had happened more than once before—but never on so vast a scale—we Jews began to venture forth from our seclusion. And soon (perhaps too soon) many began to forget the Law that had once sheltered us. Permitted at last to discard our garb of shame, we discarded our *tzitzith* as well. Free at last to enjoy the present, we ceased to rehearse the past and dream longingly of the future. In the year 1800 all save a nameless handful of Jews were undeviating in their observance of Judaism. Whether we lived in London or Warsaw, in Paris or Bagdad, we all fasted on the Day of Atonement, feasted on Passover, and kept the dietary laws all year round. But by 1848, when the revolutionary gains became consolidated, there was already widespread laxity; and by 1905, when the migrations from Eastern Europe had reached flood-tide, the fate of traditional Judaism seemed sealed. Dr. Arthur Ruppin writing in 1911 estimated that no more than six million of the Jews in the world were still devoutly orthodox. Of the remaining six million, half were already making overt com-

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promises, a third had lapsed into indifference, and the rest were totally hostile to the ritual.

But Ruppin's estimates, though set down in a book entitled *The Jews of Today*, describe a situation altogether of yesterday. When he surveyed the scene almost half the Jews in the world were still herded in the Russian "Pale of Settlement," where they had to live largely as in medieval days. But since the Bolshevik Revolution all that is changed. Half the Jewish population of that region is now subject to the Soviets, and its piety is being "liquidated" with astounding (and to some observers quite inexplicable) swiftness. The other half, now subject to the Republic of Poland, is still clinging to its ritual, but with not nearly the zeal it manifested only a generation ago. Therefore it would be a closer approximation to the truth to say that no more than a quarter of the world's Jewry adheres to the Law any longer. Of the total population, now estimated at sixteen million, probably only four million are still approximately observant Jews (Orthodox). Of the rest, at least six million are at best semi-observant (Conservative), three million have become indifferent to the Law (Reform or Radical Nationalist), and another three million are altogether hostile to it (Assimilated or Communist). And unless the Gentile counter-tide recently risen in Germany succeeds in inundating the whole world, the chances are that this drift on the part of the Jews will continue unabated.

The drift must continue because all the forces of modern life give it impetus. Industrialism, education, political liberalism, internationalism—so long as such things continue to wax in the Gentile world, so long must piety wane in Jewry. For that piety, one must remember, involves not so much the acceptance of a set of dogmas as the observance of a multiplicity of rites. Judaism is not simply a vague "way of life"; it is also, and far more radically, a distinct manner of living. That is why the process of decay, marked enough in recent years in all other religious communions, has been able to advance so much more rapidly in Judaism. A Christian can (by straining) remain orthodox despite the changes that have come into the world, for his orthodoxy manifests itself largely in the realm of ideas. He can somehow resolve the conflict between his traditional faith and the world's secular knowledge by locking each off in a separate compartment of his mind. But such a solution is denied the Jew, for his tradition conflicts not alone with secular knowledge, but even more with secular life. Wherever that life remains barbarous, his tradition can persist. For instance, in the remoter settlements in Lithuania, Poland, the Balkans, North Africa, Mesopotamia, Persia and India—in such places he is but little tempted to desert his ancestral fortress. But in the more advanced regions

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the temptation is irresistible, for in them he finds his ritual not a fortress but a tomb.

There are those who make great lament because of this that has happened in Israel; but their cries are like the whimpering of mice when a forest burns. They cannot possibly halt the devastation. So long as life stood almost still, the Talmud could (with slight and gradual modifications) continue to command adherence. But now that life has been totally revolutionized, the Talmud must perforce be swept away. A new fury, the literal *deus ex machina*, has come into the world in this last century; and in its path the walls of the Law are like so much tinder. If the Jew today is so fast deserting his old ritual, it is because in an industrialized world that ritual is totally untenable.

Consider for example what has had to come to pass in Palestine in recent years. The Jews there are seeking to re-create a homeland for themselves, and are succeeding amazingly. But the success is entailing a complete break with the Law. To give but one instance, the electric power and other utility stations have to be manned on the holy days as on all other days, and since it is hardly possible to employ auxiliary staffs of Arabs to serve as *shabat goyim*, the profanation must be committed by Jews. Therefore in a place like Tel Aviv, the one "all-Jewish" city in the world, Jews will be found clad in overalls and covered with grease and sweat even on the Day of Atonement. There is no

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alternative, for light, water, sewage disposal, fire prevention, transportation, the telephone system—these essential services dare not be interrupted. The ancient ritual, devised as it was to fit a relatively primitive world, cannot easily be accommodated to the new order. It bulks too large, and gets entangled in the gears of modern existence. Therefore it is of necessity being discarded—even in the one land where Jews are at home.

### 3

And in other lands it is being forgotten completely. Not in the backward ones, to be sure, for in them the Talmudic order is still in advance of secular life. For instance in a Galician village the ordinary Jew is glad enough to keep the Torah, for the more he can set himself apart from the peasants around him, the less he feels debased. Therefore he will not eat as they do, nor sleep in their houses, nor work by their side. He will not even wear their garb. Not content with the half-hidden *tzitzith* under his vest, he often distinguishes himself further by wearing a broad flat fur hat, a coat to his heels, and long stockings into which he tucks his trouser-bottoms. The costume is a relic of the eighteenth century, when revolution and sansculotism were still unknown, and the gentry still wore breeches; and to the Galician *chassid*, the "pietist," it has become sacred. For he feels himself very definitely



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a member of the gentry, and is determined to make the churls around him realize it. He is like the poet who wears long hair and a flowing tie in order to proclaim to the world that he is not to be confused with the philistines around him.

A Jewish lad in Poland is not allowed to play with the children of the peasants, for the latter, he is told, are all *mamzerim*, "bastards." That is said of them with no trace of malice. The bastardy of those Gentile children, it is pointed out, is simply a matter of fact, for they were conceived in a wedlock unhallowed by the Mosaic Law. And as the lad grows up he learns to take that attitude toward everything else that is not Jewish. No matter how attractive a Gentile maiden may be, she remains to him a *shiksa*, an "abomination." Should he marry her, his father will cut him off and mourn for him as for one dead. For so far as his father and all his kin are concerned, life outside their own holy caste is quite the same as death.

There are certain writers who become tremulously nostalgic and tender when describing the life of those pietist Jews. Ensconced in laurel-bowered English cottages, or seated in cafés on Montparnasse, such writers will wax ecstatic as they discourse on the effulgent "mysticism" enhaloing the ghetto hovels. But that, I fear, is because they have never entered those hovels. Had they done so they would in all likelihood realize—unless sentimentality had too thickly blurred their sight

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—that life in them is not bathed in the lambent light of unearthly wisdom: that instead it is dark and scabrous with superstition. To be sure, pietism is not entirely confined to the hovels; there are isolated instances of it even in palaces. I have met fastidious hidalgos in Amsterdam, white-bearded bankers in Frankfurt, and millionaire realtors in New York City, who laid claim (not always too modestly) to the most scrupulous observance of the Talmudic ritual. But they are eccentrics. The typical orthodox Jew is such a one as a certain sad-eyed innkeeper who was my host one night in a Polish village. He was a tall gaunt man with an unkempt iron beard, and he was dressed in a peaked cap and long gray coat, as became a Jew in that region. He had a wife and six small children, and the whole family lived in a tottering wooden house one room of which served as a shop by day and (when luck brought a traveller) as an inn by night. I slept in that room between feather-beds that were pungent, and when day broke I was not sorry to hear my host call me to prayer. He brought me water for my hands, and then turned toward the east and began to mutter the morning devotions. I joined him in a moment, putting on the phylacteries with ill-concealed haste—it was far too cold to bare one's arm with comfort—and swaying as much to keep warm as to show zeal. And when, fifteen minutes later, our devotions were over, we both sat down to breakfast.

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My glass of tea was scalding, and while it cooled I took in my surroundings. The room looked even more squalid in the grayness of dawn than it had in the flickering light of the oil-lamp the night before. The feather-beds between which I had tried to sleep, still lay there gaping in the corner. Nearby stood an open barrel of flour and a few sacks of cereals; a sagging shelf was littered with bolts of cotton goods and boxes of notions. On the walls hung fragments of harness, rusty implements, and frayed coils of rope. The whole place seemed to whimper with poverty and neglect. A trickle of melted snow from the roof had formed a pool in the center of the room, and the child who had brought us our tea had tracked the moisture all over the floor. The wind had driven snow through the loose window-frame and under the door, and there were sharp draughts all around us. Yet the room reeked as though its air had not been changed in ages.

"How long have you lived in this house?" I inquired of my host.

"All my life," he replied, loudly sipping his tea through the lump of sugar in his mouth. "My father (*olav hasholom!*) built it after the great fire." And then, seeing the look in my eyes, the man added: "A Jew lives in a finer house over there in the 'golden land,' no?" There seemed to be no envy in the remark. He spoke as though resigned to his ill-fortune.

"Not at all," I hastened to assure him. "Indeed a

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house to oneself is a luxury in America. But what little we do have is"—I searched in my mind for the right phrase—"is, well, made comfortable."

"Ach, comfort!" he shrugged. "How can a Jew know comfort?"

"Why not?" I remonstrated. "But a little effort, and you could know comfort enough in this very house. If only you would repair the roof where it leaks, and that window sash where it has shrunk, and the door where it sags; and if you would—" I halted. A look of such dismay had crept into the man's sunken eyes, that I could not utter another word. He stared at me a moment as though he thought me out of my head; and then, almost pityingly, he said:

"What vanity is this which you speak, my son? Know you not that we Jews are in exile? Of what avail, then, to run about and mend and clean? A Jew must be pious, that is all. He must think of his soul, not his body. He must pray and study the Torah and be patient. Then, when the Messiah comes, he will be redeemed at last, and in the Holy Land he will inherit his comfort. Such is the Law, and all else is—is (*pooh*) Communism!"

I became silent, for what answer could I make? To have tried to shake that man's dark faith would have been as cruel as it would have been fruitless. For he lived by that faith, as his fathers had lived by it before him—and as his sons too will have to live by it unless

they escape his world. Wherever Jews dwell in the midst of hate and vileness, there they must cling to that faith. For by it they save themselves from sinking to the level around them. In the walled *mellahs* of the North African towns, where odors nose their way like avid rooting swine; in the noisome cities of Irak and Iran, where the ghettos throb like fistulas; in the mountain settlements of Kurdistan and in the sand-swept towns of Bokhara's plains; above all in the muddy and verminous hamlets of Poland, Roumania, and Galicia: in all such places the Jews save themselves by walling themselves in with their Torah. They may live in squalor, but it is nothing like the squalor outside their camp. They may be ignorant, credulous, and narrow-minded; but not nearly so much so as the *goyim* who are their neighbors.

And this, I repeat, is solely because the Jews there are orthodox. The ancient rabbis called the Law a yoke, and a cumbersome burden it may seem. But where the exigencies of life lower all men to beasts, it is good to bear a yoke, for it is taming.

### 4

When men can be men, however, a yoke becomes an evil—as all Jews at once discover when they escape to the fairer lands. That very innkeeper, had he followed his brother who emigrated to the United States thirty years ago, would long since have ceased to be so wrapped

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up in the Law. If proof of that be required, one need only point to the conduct of that brother. At home he too wore the peaked cap and long coat of this tribe, for thus he distinguished himself from those whom he regarded as his inferiors. But in America he discovered that *he* was the inferior, so he hastily discarded his distinctive garb, and began to dress like the rest in the land. That was but the beginning of his metamorphosis. Soon he took to trimming and clipping his beard, until finally all that was left to bear witness to his lingering care for the Law was an inconspicuous tuft on his chin. He continued to observe the dietary restrictions, for that entailed no more than inconvenience. But he had to neglect the Sabbath, for—unless he set up in business as a *kosher* butcher, or a baker of *matzos*, or a seller of Jewish prayer-books—to have refrained he would have had to keep two days of rest, and that would have been ruinous. It had been different in Poland, for there no matter what his business, his only competitors had been Jews like himself. Keeping the Sabbath, therefore, had not put him at a disadvantage. But now he had to compete with Gentiles, and piety became a luxury he could not afford.

Nor was it solely commercial pressure that forced him to become lax. In addition there was the distracting atmosphere of America. The sacred pursuits which had occupied so much of his time in the old land seemed to have no place in this new world. There they had

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been positively pleasurable. The synagogue had been a blessed retreat for the Jew in Poland, a place where he could forget the horror of this life and fix his mind on the joys of the life to come. But here in America life was not all horror. On the contrary, though hardly paradisiac, it had its attractions. To him it seemed (by contrast with what he had suffered in Poland) that a Jew was completely free here. He imagined he could join unhindered in the common scramble for wealth and honor, and if he won, none could cheat him of his prize. All he had to do was work hard, and he could "make good."

So our Jew threw himself heart and soul into the task of "making good"—and that left but little time for piety. If it troubled him (and it usually did when he beat his breast during the litany of sins on the Day of Atonement), he consoled himself with the assurance that once he had secured what he was striving for, he would give himself as never before to the Torah.

But "sin breeds sin," as the old rabbis said. The years have passed and our Jew is now in a position to carry out his resolution. Yet, no matter how he tries, he fails. Having once yielded to compromise, he cannot quite return to his pristine devoutness. For instance, he cannot possibly bring himself to donning again the long kaftan worn by the pious in the "old country." Instead he affects a "Prince Albert" coat, and that substitution reveals what time and trade have done to him. Evidently

he no longer feels it needful to hark back to the eighteenth century; the Victorian style has become archaic enough for him now.

And even in making that modest reversion, he cannot escape a secret sense of play-acting. Perhaps he has taken once more to keeping the Sabbath—his grown son looks after the store now—and he may make a display of great scrupulousness touching the Law. But there is a quality of self-consciousness in his behaviour. He sees that modern inventions have stultified many of the old prohibitions. For example, he can control the light and heat in his house on the Sabbath without any contact whatsoever with fire. All he has to do is press a button on the wall. Similarly he can ride on the Sabbath without causing his ox or his ass or any of his cattle to break the day of rest. All he has to do is get into his automobile, touch a lever, and steer. Again, he may now carry objects on the Sabbath as far as he pleases, for, according to the Law, carrying is permitted within one's habitation, and a habitation is defined as any area enclosed by a wire between posts. And are there not wires now strung on telephone poles to the very end of the earth? . . .

Our regenerate Jew sees all these breaches made in his ancient wall by modern technology; yet he refuses to take advantage of them. He insists that the spirit of the Law must be obeyed no matter what may have become of its letter. But none the less the presence of those



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breaches disturbs him. He may ignore them, but he cannot forget them. And as a result his piety is strained. Pervading and sustaining it there is not so much belief as make-belief.

### 5

And this man I have been describing is the exception. The generality of immigrant Jews—at least in the United States—never make even the attempt to revert to Orthodoxy. That is because they either never find time to do so, or never sense the need. They remain to their dying day what the pious call “fifty-fifty” Jews, observing a religion part traditional, part expedient. And their children, of course, go further. In this, however, the immigrants who remain lax seem to fare no worse than those who return to piety. Both live to see their sons and daughters grow more and more estranged from the Law. The degree of the estrangement depends not so much on the way in which those sons and daughters may have been reared, as on the environment in which they have their later being.

For example, the eldest daughter, being perhaps married to an immigrant, will usually diverge but little from the parental way of life. She will observe the dietary laws in her kitchen, and light the candles each Sabbath eve. She may even make a show of observing the less indelicate of the rites connected with feminine hygiene. But in all these things she will be less punctili-

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ous than her mother. She will not permit swine's flesh or oysters to be brought into her home (she says the very sight of them would fill her with nausea!) but if her children are puny she will give them milk with their dinner, and she herself will occasionally pollute her lips with ice-cream after meat. Similarly, though she will light the Sabbath candles, she will not hesitate to put them out again when they burn low and begin to smoke. And if she does resort to the *mikveh*, the post-menstrual bath, it will be in great embarrassment, and only because her mother, or mother-in-law, insists on it.

She and her husband may belong to a congregation, but they will rarely attend the services save on the more important holy days, and on an occasional Friday evening. It will be what is called a "Conservative" congregation, one in which the prayer ritual has been moderately occidentalized. The men still sit with covered heads, and on the holy days they still wear prayer-shawls. But the women are not relegated to an ante-room or the balcony, and there is no platform in the center of the synagogue for the cantor and his choir. An even more radical innovation in such congregations is the effort to achieve decorum in the service. The anarchic freedom characteristic of the old-fashioned synagogue is frowned upon. There is less individual praying, less mumbling and swaying, and above all less casual conversation. The Orthodox Jew calls his synagogue a *bes ha-knesses*, a "meeting house," and he is

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wont to consider it his second home. If he feels like shouting his prayers, he will shout ("Our God is very aged," he will sometimes explain with a laugh, "and unless we shout He may not be able to hear!") and if he feels like leaving in the middle of the service, or exchanging a witticism with his neighbor, he will not hesitate to do so. But in these modernized synagogues such free and easy behaviour is severely discountenanced. Their leaders insist on what might be described as a "reconditioned" traditionalism—and somehow they gain only lukewarm support.

If our couple does attend the services, it is not so much to draw near to God as to draw near to other couples. These people, one must remember, are for the most strangers in their present environment. Even such of them as were born in this country are still immigrants, for they have wandered socially if not geographically. And they want to become tethered at last; they want to "belong" somewhere. Therefore, if they can afford it, they affiliate themselves with a congregation, for thus they are provided with an avenue to fellowship. Such fellowship is of course Jewish—they have not yet reached the stage of desiring any other—yet not, as they would put it, *too* Jewish. In essence what they want is a ghetto to dwell in. Not the iron ghetto of their forefathers in Poland, nor the copper ghetto of their fathers still dwelling in the slums. No, they want a golden ghetto; but since that is beyond their reach,

they are content (for the present) with a gilded one. And that they find in the Conservative congregation. There the young husband meets men of approximately his own economic status—small merchants, petty industrialists, and struggling professional men—and he can join them in their occasional discussions and card-games. Similarly the young wife can meet women of her social level, real ladies who serve tea in cups, not glasses. . . .

But the vast majority of the Jews in this modest stratum, especially in the larger cities, do not join congregations. In part that is because they cannot afford the price; but more often it is because they lack the desire. They integrate themselves socially by means of secular Jewish agencies: the "sick-benefit" fraternities, the local Young Men's Hebrew Association, the card-club, or the trade-union. They remain Jews, therefore, and continue to live almost hermetically in a ghetto; but it is a ghetto without the grace of religious life. Many of those Jews are social and political radicals, and spurn the very thought of a religious life. But the rest have no such convictions—they are simply "inertials." On Friday evening they go to the theater or the movies (somehow that one evening in the week still has a gala connotation to them) and only perhaps on the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement do they feel the urge to enter a synagogue. Even then they are impelled not so much by a longing to unburden their hearts in

prayer as by a desire to appease a vague nostalgic itch. But since there is no room for them on those days in the established sanctuaries, they are content to attend mushroom synagogues in rented halls.

These mushroom synagogues are one of the most revealing symptoms of how Judaism has decayed in recent years. Most of them are organized and led by free-lance cantors who make no pretence to being men of godliness. They do not have to. When Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs—so the ancient rabbis point out—he was careful to announce at the outset who he was and whence he stemmed. "The Proverbs of Solomon, the Son of David, King of Israel," he began. And likewise in the Book of Ecclesiastes he took the trouble to state his origin and rank. But when it came to Canticles, he felt no need to present his credentials. "The song of songs, which is Solomon's" he began with bland abruptness—and then went right into his lay. . . . And these free-lance cantors follow the wise king's example. Since they do not set themselves up as philosophers or preachers, but claim merely to be singers, they see no need to expatiate on their moral character. They are artists who for three days in the year devote themselves to Art for God's sake. And who would ask artists to be saints?

Whether God finds their devotion pleasing is open to dispute. But none can doubt that the people find it good. Most of these cantors (all of them, according to their own claims, are "graduates" of the St. Petersburg

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or the Budapest Conservatory) have overwhelming voices, and they know dozens of melting arias with which to vary the traditional chants. And their auditors, being neither pious folk, nor overly cultivated, find the catchy renditions exactly to their taste. If the *hallel* is sung to a snatch from "Aïda," or the *el moleh rachamim* to a bit from "Pagliacci," their eyes shine with delight, and only with difficulty do they keep from clapping. For they like to hear the ancient litanies sung à La Scala.

The truth is, those services are little more than concerts, and they are attended with about as much reverence. Their chief detraction is the price of admission—tickets to the boxes or the orchestra stalls sometimes cost as high as twenty dollars—for unless one pays one cannot enter. Police are stationed at all the doors to see to that. Should you have an urgent message for one of the "worshippers" inside, it will require no little pleading before they will let you go in to deliver it. And quite likely as you pass through the door you will hear the ticket-collector shout after you in richly accented English: "But remember, Mister, don't get smart and try to stay in there to pray!"

### 6

Of course, one will find High Holy Day services to which there is no admission charge. But, significantly, these are not very popular. The reason is that most of them are held under the benevolent auspices of the local

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"Reform" congregations, and their whole atmosphere has little appeal for Jews of the sort I have been describing. Reform Judaism is largely a German product, and was imported to this country—where alone it has been able to flourish—by the German Jews who migrated here during the second half of the last century. In essence it is a sort of Jewish Protestantism, for its central emphasis is on faith, not works. It refuses to concede any binding validity to the Law; its devotion is all to the Prophets. It insists that the one vital quality in Judaism is its doctrine of the Mission—that is, the notion that the Jews were chosen to teach all men to love one another—and that everything else is extraneous. Therefore it regards the whole traditional ritual as picturesque but outworn: something akin to an ancient ruin which one admires but in which one would not care to live.

According to Reform Judaism, the separateness ordained by the Torah may have been imperative enough in earlier and darker days; but now it is altogether anachronistic. It is, says this sect, absurd and even wicked for Jews to continue to wall themselves in and pray for the return to Zion. Any and every place where they can live in freedom is their Zion, and any and every synagogue is now the "temple" prophesied by Isaiah—"a house of prayer for all peoples." Therefore the services in the synagogues should conform to local convention, and be conducted in the local vernacular.

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There must be strict decorum. The rude indiscipline, the heedless coming and going, the sporadic shouting in one corner and mumbling in another, the sighs and groans and irreverent exchanges: such crudities have no place in a House of God. There must be solemnity and reverence—as in a church. And all exoticism must be banished. The wearing of hats and prayer-shawls, the segregation of the womenfolk, the quavering cantillation in an oriental tongue, the prohibition of instrumental music, the tedious readings from the Sacred Scrolls, the disquisitions on Talmudic quibbles: these must be forgotten. The ritual must be brought up to date and made attractive and intelligible—again, as in a church.\*

It is easy to understand why such a movement was able to take root in the United States two generations ago. The immigrant Jews found themselves in a land where apparently there was *almost* no prejudice against them. They and the Gentiles were equally white men, and partners in the common enterprise of settling a continent. Therefore the Jews felt that to set up the ram-parts of their Law in this place would be most grievously impolitic. In the first place, it would have drawn undue attention to themselves, and that would have

\* It is revealing that in 1846, in the first Reform sermon delivered in Cincinnati (which has ever since been the center of the movement), Rabbi James Gutheim appealed for these changes because they were "in accordance with the customs prevailing in our neighbors' churches." *The Jewish Community of Cincinnati*, by Barnett R. Brickner, p. 39.



been socially embarrassing. (Being still largely in the pioneer stage of development, Americans regarded all eccentricity with the gravest suspicion.) In the second place, strict observance of the ritual would have taken up much of their time, and would have hindered them economically. For time was money here.

Thus it came about that when the East-European Jews began to flood to the United States in the nineties, they found this attenuated species of Judaism already well-established here. True, it had won over but a tiny minority of the Jews in the land. (In 1893 the "Union of American Hebrew Congregations" could boast but nine thousand members out of a total Jewish population of well over half-a-million.) The rest were either still bound to orthodoxy or already far out on the sea of indifference. Yet the Reform "temple" was unmistakably the most virile and important Jewish institution in America at the time, and it should have attracted the newcomers. Yet, it did not. In part that was because the "temples" had become social institutions, and the German Jews who had founded them were reluctant to invite in the Russian Jews. Historically the two groups had much in common, for the Russian Jews were themselves largely German in origin, and still spoke a language—*Jüdisch-Deutsch*, or *Yiddish* as it came to be called—which was basically the Rhineland speech of the fifteenth century. Besides, a goodly portion of the so-called German Jews in America were actually from Posen, Moravia, and other provinces right on the fron-

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tier of Eastern Europe. What most distinguished the two groups was the fact that one was already Americanized while the other was still foreign. But this was enough to make them two totally different peoples. The older settlers (all of one generation older) felt that they "belonged" in this country. They had already learnt its language, assimilated its ways, and acquired a measure of its wealth. But the newcomers, ignorant of English, still dressed in outlandish clothes, bearded, and utterly poverty-stricken, appeared incurably alien.

There was, however, one iron bond between the two groups, and that was their common alienship in the eyes of the Gentiles. Those Gentiles were unable or unwilling to discriminate. So far as they were concerned, a Jew was a Jew no matter what his tongue, how he dressed, or whence he came. And this literally forced the German Jews to befriend their unprepossessing co-religionists. Such an interpretation of their benevolence may sound cynical, but it is not unjustified. The established group was bountiful to the newcomers, building them "settlement houses," aiding them through "free loan societies," and seeking in a score of other ways to speed the process of their adjustment. But this was done largely in self-defense. Those German Jews, it must be realized, were striving hard to make themselves "acceptable" to the Gentiles, and they found themselves grievously embarrassed by this sudden influx of bearded kinsmen. Unable to disavow the relationship, they had no

other recourse save to try to make those kinsmen look presentable as swiftly as possible.

But that, apparently, did not imply accepting them as social equals. Actually the older settlers felt themselves socially far nearer to their Gentile fellow-Americans than to their immigrant fellow-Jews. That is why, especially in the southern and western states, relatively little obloquy was attached to intermarriage with a Gentile, whereas intermarriage with one of the "foreign" Jews was regarded as a most scandalous *mésalliance*. Just as the Spanish and Portuguese Jews settled in America since Colonial times looked down on the German Jews when they first arrived, just so did these German Jews now look down on the East-European Jews. Not until a generation had passed and the East-European Jews too became Americanized, was there any bridging of the chasm between the two groups. Even then, however, only selected individuals from the newer element were able to cross over. The rest stayed where it was felt they belonged; and there, left to their own devices, they rapidly developed a religious life of their own. The Reform Judaism of the German Jews was too reformed for them. If the ritual had to be modified, they preferred to do it guardedly, sacrificing no more than seemed absolutely necessary. And thus they developed the Conservative type of synagogue which I have already described.

But there were those among the East-Europeans who

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were not content to stay in their own group. In some instances it was because they objected to its religious conservatism; but more frequently, one suspects, it was because they disliked its social status. And these began to go over to the Reform congregations. It was a fortunate thing for those congregations, for they were already beginning to languish. As we have seen, the Reform movement had never won over more than a minority of the German Jews even of the first generation. It was still less successful, proportionately, with the second generation, and seemed to be failing altogether with the third. What saved the day was the trickle (at first it was no more than that) of new adherents from the East-European fold. In 1893 there were actually fewer "temples" in the United States than there had been ten years earlier. But after that the tide turned, moving very slowly until about 1914, and then sweeping forward with what looked like significant impetus. The total membership in the Reform communion, which had been less than twenty thousand in 1913, was over forty-five thousand in 1923, and over sixty-one thousand in 1930. But these gains were made entirely from among the East-European Jews. Most of the descendants of the German Jews had apparently lost interest in the movement.

Today not one in ten of the Reform rabbis, and not one in twenty of those preparing to become Reform rabbis, is descended from the older stock. And this is

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becoming true also of the lay leadership. A generation ago the roster of the members in any "temple" would have been made up almost exclusively of names like Wertheimer, Sinzheimer, Bettelheimer, and Kahn. But today you will find more and more Shemanskys, Warshawskys, and Levins. The third generation of those who created this modernized Judaism has become so modern that it has almost forgotten Judaism. Part of that generation has gone over to Unitarianism, part to Christian Science, and much of the rest to complete indifference. Even those of its members who still retain the family pew in the "temple," rarely occupy it save on the High Holy Days. They may continue to support the rabbi, but largely because he is a social convenience. He is more decorative than a justice of the peace at a wedding ceremony, and his presence adds befitting mournfulness to a funeral. For the rest, the rabbi is considered worthy of his hire because he is (in the eyes of the Gentiles) the spokesman for the Jewish community. And it is as such, as an ornament among the Jews and an apostle to the Gentiles, that these grandchildren of the founders of the "temple" still find a use for their minister.

### 7

These ministers, of course, are not blind to the situation, and the more earnest among them are greatly exercised to find a way of mending it. They realize that if

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Reform Judaism failed to hold the descendants of the German Jews, it will fail no less signally with the descendants of the Polish and Russian Jews, unless something is done to strengthen it. But just how to strengthen the movement remains in dispute. Certain of the rabbis (especially since the advent of Hitlerism in Germany) favor restoring part of the old ramparts. They feel that the founders of Reform Judaism went too far, and that the time has come for counter-reform. They say that the religion it preaches is too intellectual, too critical, too barren of comforting mystery. Above all, it is too foreign to all that has been traditional in Judaism. And the leaders who are of this mind exhort their congregants to resurrect the old rites and practice them once more. Not *all* the old rites, of course. No, the severer Sabbath restrictions are impracticable, they admit, and the dietary laws are altogether outworn. But how lovely it would be, they cry, if at least the Sabbath lights were once more kindled in the homes, and if the Hebrew blessings (in abbreviated form, of course) were recited at the table. The congregations listen politely, and the older women nod approbation. Occasionally even some of the younger matrons find themselves stirred, and for a brief while actually try to carry out the pious suggestions. But their enthusiasm is always short-lived. Their grandmothers blessed the Sabbath candles not because they thought it a beautiful ceremony but because they believed it to be an indispensable

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rite. They would as lief have sat down to the Sabbath meal stark naked as without those candles. But the granddaughters have no such feeling. Nor can they cultivate it.

On the other hand there are those in the liberal rabbinate who say the movement is dying not because it has gone too far in the way of reform, but because it has not gone far enough. They point to the advance in the world's life and thought during the past generation, and demand that the religion keep pace with that advance. They plead for continual progression in the cult, for incessant revision of all its tenets and practices. But if this course is pursued—and it is urged by the more vigorous intellects in the Reform rabbinate—it can lead only to the final disintegration of the movement. If every lingering anthropomorphism is taken out of the theology, every last anachronism out of the ritual, and every trace of irrelevance out of the prayers, there can be nothing left but Humanism—a cult as acceptable to enlightened Christians or Moslems or Buddhists as to enlightened Jews. That this may be a highly desirable consummation is beside the point. All that counts, in this connection, is that it spells the end of Reform Judaism.

But that end appears to be inevitable no matter what course is pursued. It may be delayed temporarily by the wave of reaction which is just now sweeping through all the religious communions. The World War, having taken its physical toll, is now taking its toll of the intel-

lect, and in Christendom we find the liberal denominations veering toward evangelicalism, the evangelical toward the sacramentarian, and the sacramentarian toward Rome. And this reaction, savagely intensified among the Jews because of what has happened in Germany, may stay the decline of Reform and all other varieties of Judaism. But not forever. Judaism is apparently doomed because it is fundamentally ritualistic, and its ritual is hopelessly out of accord with modern life. Nor is there any adjusting it, for once that is attempted there is no ending the task until there is nothing left to adjust. One generation may halt with conservative compromises, but the next goes on to radical reforms, and the third abandons the ritual altogether. This ineluctable drift may be a bitterly evil thing; or then again it may be altogether good. As to that we cannot argue here, for we are concerned with what is, not with what should be. As historians, not theologians, we find one fact incontrovertible: Judaism as a determining factor in the everyday life of the Jews seems doomed.

### 8

And this is true not alone in America. Throughout the Occident the Jew is being compelled to discard his separative ritual; and he is doing so in a manner no less sure because it is less forthright. It is true that efforts at overt modification of the Law have made but little headway save in the United States. Here there are now



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some two hundred and eighty-three "temples"; but in Germany, where they originated, there are not even a score, in England but two or three, in France only one, and in all the rest of Western Europe at most three or four more. And these, moreover, are rarely quite so radical in their divergence from the tradition as are the "temples" in the United States.

That, however, does not at all mean that the Jewish population in Western Europe has remained Orthodox. Two elements in it have done so, the newest and the oldest. But of these the former, made up of recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, will in all likelihood not remain Orthodox for long; and the latter, a sort of "Bourbon" remnant in Occidental Jewry, is too slight to be of real significance. This second group is made up largely of "Sephardic" Jews—descendants of the fugitive Marranos from Spain and Portugal. They are not numerous, but they are widely scattered, and are in many instances conspicuously wealthy. In a class with them are certain pietistic German Jews settled briefly in Frankfurt, certain descendants of German Jews who live in England, and a few descendants of Mesopotamian Jews who live in Bombay, Calcutta, and Shanghai. These form a sort of aristocracy in Israel, and cling to their ancestral faith much as they do to their family crests. They are the "High Church" gentry in Israel; and their devoutness is as tenacious as it is sterile. They have their own very splendid synagogues—sometimes,

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as in Amsterdam, lighted only by candles—and they attend them with befitting pomp. Some among them still observe the dietary laws, and even retain private chaplains to see that no “defilement” enters their homes. Such grandees will refuse to partake of meat even at the tables of kings, and their wives will ask permission to leave royal levees before they are ended because they must be home in time to bless the Sabbath lights. Even the less observant of this stock will occasionally display startling gestures of piety. For example, the *London Daily Express* of June 11, 1926, reports that the Earl of Reading (*geb.* Rufus Isaacs), on being inducted into the House of Lords, fidgeted with his hat when the oath of office was being read to him, and then “put it firmly on his head in accordance with his religion.”

Such gestures are striking and to the romantic-minded profoundly moving. Actually, however, they are so rare as to lack any real significance. The piety of these splendid people, so genteel, so delicately moldy, is largely a façade. What you see of it is altogether genuine; but there is very little behind it. This is evidenced clearly enough by the readiness with which such Jews will intermarry with Gentiles. A hundred years ago in the United States there were several thousand descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews clinging with proud obduracy to their ancestral cult; but now they are little more than a glamorous memory. Similarly in England they have largely bred themselves out, pouring their

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blood into the veins (and their wealth into the coffers) of the haughtiest Christian families in that land. The same is true in France, and also in Italy. Even in Holland, for three hundred years their stronghold, they have dwindled in recent years. Those of them that survive there and elsewhere in the world are not unlike the surviving Tudor Catholics in England or the Monarchists in France: a proud but slightly preposterous remnant.

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The example of pietism set by that patrician remnant is hardly emulated by the majority of the Jews in Western Europe. On the contrary, if anything the latter seems to be going the way of the majority of the Jews in America. Not so far or so fast, it is true; but that is only because of the different tempo of all life on that side of the Atlantic. But with the "Americanization" of Europe—by which is really meant its industrialization—the tempo there is being heightened, and with it the de-ritualization of its Jews. At present the hegemony still rests with the Orthodox, especially in those lands where there are State Churches. For instance in England, where the Christians have their Primate of the Established Church, the Jews have their Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire. Similarly there is a Grand Rabbin in Paris, an Oberrabbiner in Berlin, and like hierarchs in all the other capitals.

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But their authority is more formal than real. For one thing, though they lay claim to being Orthodox, there are many Jews who regard them as heterodox. Nor is that charge unjustified, for from the point of view of strict traditionalism those ecclesiastics are indeed inclined to laxity. For another thing, in any grave matter involving the Jews, the governments will consult prominent laymen rather than those hierarchs. To give but one instance of this, in 1917 when Lord Balfour wished to announce that the British government favored the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, he did so in an open letter addressed not to the Chief Rabbi but to Lord Rothschild. . . .

Orthodoxy, therefore, though still the "establishment" in the Jewries of Western Europe, is neither truly orthodox nor firmly established. Wherever the Jews are well-rooted and numerous there is still a certain appearance of ritual observance. For example, in Amsterdam the great Diamond Exchange, which is almost entirely in the hands of Jews, is actually closed on Saturday and open on Sunday! Similarly the great second-hand mart there, as in London, is held on Sunday. Ghetto thoroughfares like Jodenbreestraat in the Dutch metropolis, Whitechapel in London, Rue des Rosiers in Paris, Rue de l'Orient in Antwerp, and Boernestrasse in Frankfurt, all take on a festive appearance on the Jew's day of rest. But the reality beneath the appearance is less impressive. The Jews in the old ghettos of Western

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Europe rest on Saturday rather than Sunday because the economic life in those settlements took form in days when the ritual was still a potent influence. For example, the diamond industry in Amsterdam observes the Sabbath because it has been in the hands of Jews ever since its importation in the seventeenth century. But in Antwerp, where that industry is of recent resurrection, such an arrangement is impossible. In that city too, the majority of the diamond cleavers and traders are Jews, but they are for the most part newly arrived immigrants from Eastern Europe. One would imagine, therefore, that they would be even more insistent on keeping the Jewish day of rest than the long-settled Dutch Jews; but this is not the case. The Diamond Exchange in Antwerp is closed on Sunday, not on Saturday!

It is largely due, therefore, to a sort of "cultural lag" that there is still a show of Sabbath observance in the ghettos of Western Europe. Moreover, it is little more than a show. Very few of the Jews who rest on that day do so in the manner prescribed in the Talmud. Most of them go to the cafés instead of to the synagogues; they play cards instead of studying the Torah. The Sabbath is in their eyes a holiday, not a holy day.

As for those whose social and economic life is not confined to the ghetto—among them almost all the distinguished Jews with the exception of those Tories of whom I have already spoken—they do not observe the

Sabbath even as a holiday. Nor do they observe much else of the separative ritual, for their lives are lived too largely in the world of the Gentiles. They may, because of family sentiment, still be affiliated with a synagogue, and may attend it on the High Holy Days and in time of mourning. But aside from that they pay little heed to their ancestral faith. They revere it, but they do not take it seriously.

And many go even further, and repudiate all connection with the synagogue. Some even accept baptism and proclaim themselves Christians, for thus they hope to escape the stigma which is attached to them because of their birth. The roll of such baptized Jews includes the names of some of the most distinguished characters in modern times: Benjamin Disraeli, Heinrich Heine, Ferdinand Lassalle, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Anton Rubinstein, Sarah Bernhardt, Alfred Mond, several of the Rothschilds, and countless more. It is safe to say that exceedingly few in that company ever entered the Church for genuinely religious reasons. As Heinrich Heine, one of the most honest of them, barefacedly confessed: "Had the law of the land permitted the stealing of silver spoons, I should never have turned Christian!" Of course, there have been some who have been sincerely converted, for among them we find men like Edersheim and Ewald, who made themselves leaders in Church thought and polity. But they have been the exception. The rest have been merely baptized; not really

converted, for they have been drawn to Christianity because of the advantages of its profession, not the superiority of its truth. A hoary anecdote relates how a rich French Jew, when asked by the bishop who was about to baptize him, "What is now thy belief, my son?"—replied with a laugh: "My belief is that after this I shall be received in the best homes in Paris!"

Such an attitude is not to be wondered at. These converts have rarely been men of a religious turn of mind. Had they been that they would in all likelihood have found more than enough to hold them fast to the faith of their fathers. In most instances they have been cynics who have regarded the religion of their adoption as even more incredible than the one into which they were born. To quote Heine once more: "No Jew can ever become a true Christian, for no Jew can ever believe in the divinity of another Jew. . . ."

But those who have accepted baptism, and the many more who out of parental concern baptize their children, are few compared with the hundreds of thousands of Jews in Western Europe who have simply drifted from all religious affiliation. And with each year the number of these indifferentists increases. In Western Europe as in America the fortress of the Law is crumbling. All the forces of modern life are storming and undermining it, and, whether for good or ill, its doom seems inevitable.

Even in Eastern Europe one sees that fate approaching. In Lithuania, Poland, and Galicia it may be approaching slowly; but not nearly so slowly as is usually imagined. That devout village innkeeper whom I described earlier in this chapter is no longer the typical East-European Jew. Religious laxity is spreading in his world, too. One curious evidence of it is the appearance of signs over Jewish restaurants in cities like Warsaw announcing that the food served in them is *kosher*. One never saw such signs there a generation ago. They would have been as gratuitous as signs over London shops announcing that "English is spoken here." In those days it was taken for granted throughout the "Pale of Settlement" that if a restaurant was Jewish it was necessarily conducted according to the ritual. But such a thing can no longer be taken for granted. In the hunger-years during and after the War the Jews learnt to eat anything—and very little else. And the lessons cannot now be unlearnt. The younger Jews in the cities, and to a degree even in the towns and villages, have become what their grieving elders called *apikorism*—"epicureans."

Where such "epicureanism" may end is revealed across the eastern frontier. In Soviet Russia there dwell today more than two and a half million Jews, and until yesterday they were not to be distinguished from



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those now living in Poland and Roumania. Yet today they are in religion almost an alien people. Before the Revolution they too were devout. To all outward seeming they were as content to bear the yoke of the Torah as their ancestors had been fifteen hundred years earlier. Travellers said of them—as they said also of the muzhiks—that religion was innate in them. God was a very near Presence, and they walked hand in hand with Him morning, noon, and night.

So said the travellers, and so we believed. But it was untrue. As is now obvious, the pervasive piety of those Jews was not at all innate in them. It was induced by the exigencies of the life they led. Herded like pariahs in the "Pale of Settlement," they suffered unutterable wretchedness. The recurrent pogroms were only incidental horrors—searing flashes which served but to light up the evil which was their daily portion. Their whole world crawled with evil—with hate and poverty and disease. And what alone sustained them was the hope that soon that world would be ended. The older folk, and the weaker-spirited of the young, hoped that Heaven would end it. They sat in their dark little synagogues and prayed for the Messiah to come. But the more fiery were not content to pray: they went out and sought with their own hands to destroy that world. Especially was this true of the young Jews and Jewesses who had been to the high schools and the universities. They had had to endure unimaginable hardships and

humiliations in order to acquire an education. Being Jews they had been unable to live in the university towns outside the "Pale" unless they paid exorbitant bribes, or took out licenses as prostitutes, or (last resort) consented to baptism. And when at last they finished their courses, they found themselves still pariahs. Only now they were more than ever unwilling to remain pariahs, and they went down among their brethren and sought to arouse in them a like unwillingness. By day and by night—most of all by night—they carried on their agitation.

And when at last a revolution did come, those young Jews, and their elders too, danced for joy. They poured out of the "Pale" into Russia proper, and began to make themselves at home there. They set up their little shops, established their little synagogues, and prepared to live such lives as they had dreamed of. They thought themselves free at last.

But then came the second revolution, that of Lenin; and the glory-hour of the Jews in Russia seemed at an end. The majority of them hated Bolshevism. What they wanted, what they had labored for, what they had rejoiced in, was Menshevism. This historic detail is incidental, yet it needs to be emphasized for it is still unknown to most people. *Die Yidden in Roiten Verband*, a history of the Jews in Soviet Russia which has the imprimatur of the Moscow "Yevsektzia," is strident with complaint because the Jewish masses were at first so

hostile to Bolshevism. In the historic October Parade in Petrograd which preluded Lenin's triumph, only two groups still carried banners hailing Kerensky's tottering régime: the Don Cossacks and the Jews! And when the overturn came and the Communist Party came into power, one of its most perplexing problems was how to win over those Jews. It is true that a handful of them—Trotzky, Zinoviev, Litvinoff, and the like—had been with Lenin almost from the start. But they were Jews only in name. They had long been estranged from their own people, and had as little in common with them now as had Lenin with the middle-class Russians from whom he stemmed. It is a matter of record that at the time of the Revolution there was not a single person in the Bolshevik ranks with sufficient knowledge of Yiddish to start a propaganda newspaper among the Jews!

There was good reason why the Jews were so averse to Communism. Natively they were bourgeois. For centuries their fathers had lived by trade, and even those of them who had become factory-workers still had the trader's point of view. They wanted to strive for the good life as individuals, and Communism would not let them. So they hated it. Those who could do so, fled away. No one knows how many hundreds of thousands of Jews emigrated from Russia during those years immediately following the triumph of the Soviets. But the rest had to adjust themselves to the new order of things. It was an ordeal for most of them, an ordeal

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which is still far from ended. It was easy enough to make Communists of their young; but not nearly so easy to win over the elders. Unable to live any longer by petty trade in the towns, thousands of those Jews have had to go on the land and try to become peasants. Or else they have been driven by hunger into the "heavy industries," where they have to do labor for which they seem totally unfitted.

And in the severity of that economic wrench, the religious wrench is being accepted with little more than an added groan. That is most significant. When I visited Russia not long ago I found to my amazement that Judaism was already virtually in a state of collapse. Many of the finest synagogues had been turned into Jewish workingmen's clubs, and innumerable smaller synagogues had already fallen into disrepair. Factories like that of Dubrowna, once devoted to making prayer-shawls, were now busily turning out red flags. In communities where once there would have been a thousand Jews gathered in the synagogues on a Sabbath, I discovered barely ten, and they all greybeards. Religious instruction of the young is legally permitted if given in private; yet no one seemed to be taking advantage of this privilege. Even in the Jewish centers of 'White Russia and the Ukraine, where a generation ago a knowledge of Hebrew was as universal among the males as circumcision, I found a generation growing up in total ignorance of the Holy Tongue. The old *cheder*, that

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dark and noisome room crowded with lads of every age, all of them swaying and chanting while the aged teacher listened with strap in hand—it was gone. Instead one saw the Jewish children, girls as well as boys, attending fine new schools where they worked on “projects”—making toy tractors was a favorite one—and learning from fiery, thin-lipped young women how to spell “ideology” in Yiddish. One heard no more of Moses; his place had been taken by Karl Marx. King David had given way to Lenin, and the Philistines to the *burzhoi*. The ghost of Rabbi Jochanon ben Zakkai had been exorcised; the principles of Professor Dewey now reigned supreme. The children of parents who had once dreamed of the Messiah, went through the streets singing that God was a capitalist’s lie.

And the change was no less marked in the world of grown-ups. The “house of learning,” once as ubiquitous in any settlement of Jews as was the grog-shop in any settlement of Gentiles, had almost completely disappeared. In Moscow I did discover a stuffy attic in which sat some twenty young men—several of them university students, and one in the uniform of the Red Army—all of them swaying over folios of the Talmud while an old rabbi elucidated a problem in the tractate dealing with the Paschal offering. In Odessa, after much searching, I found another such group, and in Lenin-grad I heard there was a third. Such adult study-circles were not prohibited by law, but nevertheless they were

so rare that most Jews of whom I inquired assured me they were non-existent. "Who has time now to give thought to the old Torah?" they cried in despair—or with a laugh.

This was the most astounding thing I learnt in Russia: that a cult which had lasted for centuries could be shattered in a decade. Only yesterday the mountain of Talmudism seemed made of iron in Russia. But once the Communists set Russia quaking, the mountain proved but a heap of pumice. The old people went frantic; they wrung their hands and cried out in dismay. But the young Jews and Jewesses, once they were drawn into the Communist ranks—which did not take long—paid no heed to the lamentations. If anything they proved even more truculent than the Gentiles in the campaign to "liquidate" the synagogue. Why they did so will perhaps become clear later on, when we see how changed is the social status of those Communist Jews. For the present it is enough to note what they did to their religion: they scrapped it.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

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JUDAISM has been scrapped in Russia, and it is apparently being scrapped everywhere else. Day by day the old piety recedes, giving way here to guilty compromise, there to loose indifference, elsewhere to harsh aversion. But what of it? Jewry will live on, I am convinced, no matter what becomes of its religion. It will live on because, as in Majorca, it no longer needs the rampart of Jewish Law to preserve it. The rampart of Gentile intolerance is stout enough to do that.

Not in Russia perhaps, for there race prejudice is being assailed as vigorously as religious devotion. And that appears to be the reason why the Jews there have been so ready to abandon their religious separativeness. It is because as Jews they are no longer besieged. True, the majority of them in Russia are being subjected to afflictions (well-meant, no doubt, but still afflictions) such as no tyrant in all history ever laid on a people. Under Communism they are being forced to change their ways and their thoughts and their innermost beings—and go hungry with it all. But they know that the Gentiles too are being subjected to such afflictions,

and the knowledge gives them heart. Throughout the past the Jews have been alone in their wretchedness; but now they have company, and it relieves them. Under the Czar they clung to their religion with frenzied stubbornness because then they were commanded to take another in its place. But now they are being urged to do no more than give up all religion—just as the Christian Slavs, the Moslem Uzbeks, and the Buddhist Kal-mucks are being urged to give it up. And under such circumstances the Jews seem acquiescent. No longer *set* apart, they feel they need no longer *keep* apart. They are free in Russia, free as perhaps nowhere else on earth today. They are not accorded mere tolerance; they enjoy comradeship. Whether this will last, no one can tell; but it is certainly part of Soviet teaching that it *should* last.

What is more curious is that, though the Jews are no longer set apart in Russia, they are still regarded as members of a distinct nationality. But it is a secular nationality, like any other included in the Soviet Union. Just as there are Ukrainians, Georgians, Tartars, or Germans living in Russia, so there are Jews. One people is no better, and no worse, than another. Yiddish is officially one of the languages of the land, and it is used in the courts and in the schools wherever those who speak it form the bulk of the local populace. One may address an envelope in Yiddish—the lettering will of course be Hebrew—to any destination in the Union,



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and (theoretically) it will be as promptly delivered as if addressed in Russian. And this is enormously comforting to the Jews. It makes them feel that they need no longer either conceal or obtrude their identity; they can take it for granted at last. They know that it is against the law—graver still, against good Communist taste—to deride them because they are Jews. Of course, the desire to deride them is still strong in the peasantry, and this they well realize. "Scratch a Russian," they will tell you, "and you will still find a Tartar." But under Communism so much has been done in the way of sanitation, that scratching is becoming a forgotten pastime among Russians. . . . Besides, if there is still the Tartar in them, they are being taught a new way to reveal it. If they simply must hate, they are urged to hate according to class, not according to race or religion. They are taught to loathe the bourgeois, be he Jew, Christian, Moslem, or Buddhist. But the workingman, they are told, is their *tovarish*, their "comrade," and should be loved no matter what his birth or creed.

And for just that reason the Jews seem to have less chance of surviving in Russia than anywhere else on earth today. Even though they have been given a national status, and promised an autonomous government, they have too little left to keep them distinctive. Their culture, their mythology, their folk-songs, their very cooking, though largely influenced by the Gentiles among whom they have lived, are all fundamentally

products of their religious life. For example, the *Schalet* which Heine called the "food of the gods," and which is (next to stuffed-fish) the European Jew's most distinctive and delectable dish, might never have been invented had it not been for the exigencies of the ritual. *Schalet*, or *Tcholont* in Yiddish—the name evidently derives from the French *chaleur*, meaning "heat"—is a steamed pudding eaten on the Sabbath. It became the traditional dish for that day because it could be prepared on Friday and left in a warm place to cook itself overnight, thus evading the law prohibiting the use of fire on the holy day. *Schalet* therefore is something born of the ritual, and if that ritual is abjured, the dish becomes so to speak disinherited. It may retain its fragrance and flavor, but it will have lost its meaning.

And this is true of almost all else that is characteristically Jewish. The sacred and the profane are inseparable in Israel's folkways. They are, to borrow a Spinozistic analogy, like the concave and convex sides of a curve. Take Judaism away from Jewry and there is nothing left but a husk which can remain standing only so long as some external force prevents it from falling. In Majorca, as we have seen, such a husk has been preserved for five hundred years. But Russia is not Majorca. Under Communism there can be, theoretically at least, no prop of racial antipathy to keep a devitalized Jewry alive. Moreover, under Communism the economic life of the Jews may eventually be so profoundly

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reordered that, practically as well as theoretically, no ground will be left for such a prop to stand on. Why that should be, I shall endeavor to explain in the concluding chapter. At this point I can do no more than merely predicate that outcome. If Jewry is relieved of its economic distinctiveness, almost inevitably it will be relieved of that which most provokes Gentile hate. And once that hate vanishes, a Jewry reft of Judaism will vanish with it. Lacking both external repulsion and inner will to give it cohesion, it will almost irresistibly disintegrate.

There are signs that Jewry in Russia is already disintegrating. Even now the Jews there are beginning to intermarry freely with the Gentiles, and to withhold the mark of circumcision from their offspring. They may still speak Yiddish, and talk enthusiastically of the autonomous Jewish Republic which will (some day) be established in Siberia. But in all likelihood their children will speak Russian, and their grandchildren will *be* Russian. Unless there is a reaction—as is still by no means impossible—a century hence the descendants of the Cohens and Kaplans now living in the Soviet Union will no more be Jews than the Roosevelts or Vanderbilts in the United States are now Dutchmen.

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But, unless I am altogether mistaken, no such fate awaits the Jews in the rest of the world. Here too we

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may abandon our religion, but we will live on none the less—as the Chuetas have lived on in Majorca. Indeed, millions of us are already living on in that manner today. Here in America, for example, the Jews who are most in the public eye—the financiers and merchant-princes, the doctors and lawyers, the writers, musicians, and scientists, the gangsters and prize-fighters, and the demonstrative radical working-folk—these, in large part, are Jews only because they are called by that name. Very few of them take a genuine pride in their identity. They do not for a moment imagine that they are the blessed of the Lord, and that they must preserve themselves in order to inherit His long-promised reward. On the contrary, as they will assure you perhaps with a groan, or more likely a bitter laugh, they regard their Jewishness as a curse.

But it is a curse they cannot escape. No matter where they turn, it clings to them, weighting their tread and bedevilling their souls. They are forever being reminded that they are not quite like other men; that there is something peculiar about them; that they are, to come right out with it—*Jews!* Well-meaning Gentiles, anxious not to give offence, will perhaps use instead the word “Hebrews,” or even “Israelites.” They imagine that such names, because they are archaic and redolent of the Bible, are reft of any sting. But they are mistaken. Any and every distinctive name is offensive to this sort of Jew. And let us be fair to him: he is not alto-

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gether to be despised for his attitude. He realizes that even in America there is a penalty attached to being known as a Jew. Of course, were he in any true and inward sense a son of Israel, were he still devoted to his sacred past and convinced of his apocalyptic future, he would be glad enough to pay that penalty. No matter how severe, it would be a bargain to him then. For what is there in this world one would not readily forego for the sake of the roast leviathan awaiting the faithful in Heaven? . . .

But this Jew (and how numerous is his kind today!) has long ceased to believe in Heaven. All he believes in is the earth, and all he asks is to be free in it. He wants to be treated as a man among men, advanced according to his talents, rewarded according to his deserts. Instead he is forever being discriminated against, forever being harassed and hampered and thrust aside. And for no other reason—at least so he is convinced—than that he was born a Jew.

He is exaggerating, you will say. He is overwrought and makes mountains out of molehills. Perhaps so. But at least he does have something to exaggerate. His mountains may be hallucinatory; but certainly the molehills are real. Of course, the Jew's plight is not nearly so unspeakable as that of the Negro. Indeed, in some sections of the United States it is not very much worse than that of the Catholic. But still it is evil enough to deserve some consideration. It is true that the Jew is

politically enfranchised here, and legally on a plane with all other citizens of the Republic. It is true that he lives here in physical security, and enjoys (in the graver concerns) social equality. He is accorded abundant tolerance—as to that there can be no dispute.

But in just that lies the whole evil: the Jew is still being accorded tolerance. It makes little difference how abundant the tolerance may be. Even if it is complete, perfect, absolute, it is still not enough. For it implies, as the etymology of the word reveals, that he is merely being “borne with.” It implies a certain condescension on the part of the Gentiles: they are willing to count him a man *despite* that he is a Jew.

Do I too seem to be exaggerating? Then consider for a moment the reality of the situation. Take up any daily newspaper in New York or Chicago and note how many of the “help wanted” advertisements specify that applicants must “state religion.” A few years ago, before the newspapers took to censoring the advertisement columns, employers would frankly state: “No Jews need apply.” And that is what they still mean by their religious inquiries. Those employers are not interested in the theological opinions of an applicant. All they want to know is whether he is a Jew. And if he is, he is not wanted. He is not judged as an individual, but as a member of a group. It makes no difference what may be his personal character or appearance or convictions or capabilities. The mere fact that he is of Jewish

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origin disqualifies him. And this attitude is by no means rare in the world of commerce and industry. In 1931 Heywood Broun and George Britt (both Gentiles) made a survey of the whole question of anti-Jewish discrimination in the United States, and they set down their findings with rare objectivity and much sardonic humor in a volume entitled *Gentiles Only*. That book makes sadly illuminating reading. In it one learns that in certain pursuits there is a virtual boycott against the Jews, and that only in those which are largely of their own creation—for example, the needle industries—are they able to engage unhindered. There are of course reasons to account for this widespread prejudice, but these we shall go into later. All that I am intent on establishing here (if so obvious a point needs establishing) is that such prejudice does exist.

And it is by no means confined to the world of making and selling. Paradoxically, it is even sharper in what are supposed to be the more idealistic pursuits: in education and the liberal professions. It is quite accountable that many of the "better" private schools should close their doors to Jews. They are, after all, social colonies rather than institutions of learning. But we find great universities, state-supported as well as privately endowed, showing such prejudice—and that is utterly inexcusable. Yet they do so, and sometimes quite flagrantly. Harvard and Columbia are by no means the only offenders in this regard. According to

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Broun and Britt, "reports of discrimination either on admission or in the course of campus life could be gathered from almost all . . . the Eastern colleges." That is why one finds thousands of Jewish students flocking from their homes on the Atlantic seaboard to small colleges in the Middle West and the South. As yet the aversion to their kind is less marked in those remoter institutions. Even in them, of course, Jews cannot share fully in the social life—for example, they are almost never accepted into the Christian fraternities—but at least they are able to enroll without first submitting their photographs and pedigrees. With each year, however, such havens are becoming fewer, and the children of Jews are finding it imperative to go farther and farther afield in order to receive their higher education. Last year I actually came across one of them in China—a young Jew from New York City taking his bachelor's degree at Yenching University in Pekin! . . .

Yet the obstacles in the way of receiving an academic education are slight compared with those which confront a Jew who aspires to a professional degree. That may sound incredible, seeing how many Jews today are physicians and lawyers. But it is true none the less. We Jews have a penchant for those professions. We are drawn to them much as the Finns are drawn to the fisheries, or the Italians are drawn to the vineyards. And no matter how we are restrained, a number of us cannot be prevented from entering them. It may be very good



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that the rest are kept out, for it is said that these professions are already overcrowded. But if that is so, then in all fairness (in all wisdom, too) the basis of selection should be one more pertinent than that of birth. The race should be to the swift, not necessarily to the uncircumcised.

It should be; but it is not. Even in the academic world, where merit axiomatically should be the decisive consideration, even there—especially there—the Jew finds himself at a disadvantage. In certain branches of learning (for example, English Literature) he seems to have no chance whatsoever. In others (for instance, Economics, Sociology, and Mathematics) he can, despite his undisputed bent for them, receive appointment as a university instructor only with the greatest difficulty. And even if he does succeed in obtaining an instructorship, he is rarely able to advance unhindered. Unless he is ready to deny his origin, or can conceal it by demeaning evasions, it will dog him and blight his career as might some foul scandal.

### 3

But enough on that score. There is another and even more grievous one which must be mentioned. Economic discrimination against the Jew does exist in this country, and from all indications it is waxing. But, evil as it is, it yet has one quite unintended virtue. If the Jew is markedly superior in certain pursuits, it is probably di-

rectly due to that discrimination. It compels him to exert himself. He has to work harder than the Gentile to make his way in the world—and think faster. But there is another torment to which he is subjected, and in this one can find no such redeeming quality. I refer to the social discrimination against the Jew, a thing more flagrant in America than in almost any other civilized country.

There are of course reasons for this flagrancy. In the first place, we Jews are relatively numerous in the United States and the aversion to us (as to any other virile minority) has always been in direct ratio to our numbers. In England and France we form approximately one-half of one percent of the total population; but here we form between three and four percent. In addition, the population in this country is still highly heterogeneous, and in its furious effort to make itself homogeneous it is inclined to be extravagantly hostile to all reputedly "alien" elements. Finally, what passes for Society in America is wealthy in its own right, and therefore it is under no duress to open its portals to Jews. It is otherwise in Europe, where the aristocracy is largely impecunious. The *Almanach de Gotha* has taken on the likeness of an "Almanach de Ghetto," for the rich Jews on the Continent have been able to buy their way into the lordliest circles, and the poor Jews are able to bask in twice-reflected glory. But so far as I know the *Social Register* of New York rarely bestows

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its honors on a son of Israel, and the example it sets is copied by all the provincial registers.

For all these reasons, and perhaps others more recondite, this social prejudice against the Jew is particularly intense in the United States. It manifests itself in every walk of life. The poor who live in the slums are mocked by their neighbors, and called "sheeny" or "kike." The educated are kept out of the University Clubs. The rich cannot become members of the "better" country clubs, and are excluded from the most fashionable watering-places. In the larger cities tacit understanding between the land-owners prevents Jews from living in certain suburbs or on certain avenues. All these restrictions without exception are rooted in crude prejudice; otherwise they would not be so blindly inclusive. The doors are closed not solely to Jews who may be vulgar or ignorant or unprepossessing. They are closed to all Jews indiscriminately. The chorus-girl whose hair is like spun brass and whose nose is tip-tilted has no difficulty in engaging a suite in any of those "exclusive" hotels; but the Jewish Lothario who is paying the rent for her cannot get beyond the registration desk. As for his parents, timid gentlefolk who would be embarrassed if they as much as met a chorus-girl—they would be frowned away by the very doorman. . . .

These restrictions may seem of no consequence; yet to those who suffer them they are mortifying. Nor are such people invariably to be despised for this. There

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are some Jews of indisputable worth who take no pride in their origin. To them it is something irrelevant. They may be scientists intent only on discovering new truth, or artists bent on bringing more beauty into the world. They consider themselves primarily men, not Jews, and they want to be free to do their work unhindered. Yet, the world will not let them. It persists in reminding them that they are not quite like other men, and its ways of reminding them can be unutterably tormenting. The prejudice they encounter (especially if they are very able) may not be gross and effectively thwarting. But always it is annoying. At best it is like a pestiferous fly forever returning to settle on their flesh. Even if they refuse to halt in their work and drive it away, the feel of it continues to bedevil them. The great experimental biologist, Dr. Jacques Loeb, is reported to have once cried out in exasperation: "If only you will stop bothering me because I am a Jew, I may yet be able to discover why you are a man!" There are tens of thousands of gifted Jews in the world today whose exacerbated hearts reëcho that cry.

And then there are the hundreds of thousands of just mediocre Jews whose work may be hardly affected by the social prejudice, but whose life is utterly poisoned by it. To be sure, they are hardly an inspiring lot; but for all that they deserve to be considered. Most of them are rich and infected with social ambitions. Their dearest wish is to prove that Jews are not all clannish—that

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they themselves, for example, would far rather belong to the world than to the ghetto. But when they try, they are rebuffed. They go so far—usually just far enough to become estranged from their own people—and then they are snubbed and told to return whence they came. And if they lack the pride to obey, as too many of them do, they are forced to remain pathetic hangers-on, wretched “climbers.” As the Jew in one of Robert Nathan’s novels complains: “It’s not exactly being kept out that bothers me, so much as being let in and then being made to feel out.”

The vast majority of the Jews, however, do not go far enough to be caught in so intolerable a position. Knowing that they are not wanted in Gentile circles, they keep within their own. They organize their own social institutions, their own fraternal orders, women’s clubs, athletic societies, country clubs, even trade unions. In their homes they entertain none but Jews, and even when they are abroad they still seek out Jews. It is not because they think their own kind superior. Rather it is because they feel more at home among Jews. The ordinary Jew is ill-at-ease in the company of Gentiles. He knows (or at least imagines) that his every word and gesture is being watched with a critical eye; and it makes him uncomfortable. I speak now only of the ordinary Jew. The extraordinary one, the intellectual, the artist, the financier, the pugilist—he, naturally enough, is not in the least disconcerted in the presence

of his Gentile peers. But even he, more often than not, is guilty of a subtle bias. As the late Lord Melchett once said—and coming from him it was a confession—most of the acquaintances of such a man will be Gentiles, but most of his friends will be Jews. . . . Not that such a person consciously prefers Jews. Indeed, more often than not he will admit that he abominates them. (Most extraordinary Jews, like all ordinary Gentiles, are characteristically antisemites.) But none the less he will be drawn to them, if only to join in their scorn of all other Jews. Even if he has joined a Christian congregation he will tend almost irresistibly to gravitate toward his fellow-apostates. Go to the services in any fashionable Christian Science church, and you will notice that as a rule the Jews are scattered through the congregation not singly but in clots.

And this is only natural. No matter how learned or wealthy or muscular or Christianized we may be, we remember that we are still Jews. We remember it because we are not allowed to forget it. No matter where we turn or how far we flee, the fact of our birth remains with us. To quote *Christians Only* (p. 269):

Operating for either honor or insult, advantage or disadvantage, the recognition of a Jew's Jewishness is constantly present in America today. It may be disclaimed but it is never overlooked, is always accented, and is becoming more clearly outstanding. This wall cuts across the entire structure of activity, affecting Jews at work

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and on their holidays, in their homes and clubs, in public life, in education, worship, reputation, and all the contacts and competitions which make up the social ferment of normal, non-ascetic existence. Not all these separations are of equal importance, and they do not affect equally the entire Jewish group. The wealthy Jew may be injured most deeply by the prejudice which rejects him from a club, and at this discrimination his lowly brother may be inclined to a malicious laugh. The latter has suffered more intimately; he has been refused a chance to earn his living because he was a Jew. . . . But in small concerns as well as large, for the rich as for the poor, prejudice operates constantly as a handicap and a constraint.

And that is why, no matter what becomes of Judaism in America, a Jewry cannot but survive here. The issue rests in the hands not of the Jews but of the Gentiles. It makes no difference whether we Jews may or may not want to live. What counts is that the Gentiles will not let us die.

### 4

And that prophecy may as safely be made of all the other lands on earth (save perhaps Russia), for in all of them there is this overt prejudice against the Jew. In the more advanced it may be no more than a faint reek, like the thin smoke from a buried spark. But sensitive nostrils do not fail to recognize it, and we who have such nostrils remain ill-at-ease. For we are in constant dread lest the spark flare into flame. You who are

a Gentile may laugh at us for this dread, and say we are obsessed. You are right: we are indeed obsessed—but not without reason. Recall how hatred of the Jew flared up in France during the Dreyfus Affair a generation ago. Recall how it broke out in this country when the Ku Klux Klan flourished, and when credulous Mr. Henry Ford let loose his *Dearborn Independent*. Better still, see how it is consuming Germany at this very hour.

Of all the tragedies that have ever befallen my people, this which is being enacted today in Germany is the worst. It is the worst because it is the most disillusioning. Germany is supposedly one of the most civilized of lands, and its Jews are among the most assimilated in the world. They have dwelt in that land since the Dark Ages, and though never numbering more than one hundredth of the population, they have contributed incalculably to its advancement. When enlightenment began to creep up in Europe, those German Jews were the first to desert their old ramparts. Ever since the eighteenth century they have devoted themselves to the science, the literature, the music, the art, and the politics of Germany. Many of them, unwilling to let a mere rite stand in their way, allowed themselves to be baptized. (In Berlin the fashionable Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, across the street from the department store called the "Kaufhaus des Westens," has always been so crowded with converted Jews that it has come to be



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known as the "Taufhaus [baptismal-house] des Westens.") Some went further and actually encouraged their sons to enter the Christian ministry. (In November, 1933, a semi-official investigation disclosed that approximately three percent of all the pastors in Germany were of Jewish extraction.) In certain circles it was for a time the exception for a Jew to marry within the fold. (Of some three hundred Jewish families in Berlin a century ago, there is not a single living descendant enrolled in the community today.) And most of those who remained loyal to Jewry were very qualified in their loyalty. They said that before all else they were Germans, and that their Jewishness was solely a matter of religious conviction. Just as some Germans were Lutherans, and some were Catholics, just so were they themselves Jews. Their most popular organization was one which described itself as the "Society of German Citizens of the Jewish Persuasion." (As though any of them had ever been *persuaded* to become Jews!) Whatever in the least reflected on their Germanism was repudiated by them with the most extravagant horror. For example, in 1897 when Theodor Herzl suggested that the first Zionist Congress be held in Munich, the German Jews, led by their rabbis, moved heaven and earth to keep him from carrying out his plan. They protested that the scheme to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine was not merely fantastic but positively malevolent. For their part, Germany was their home-

land, and they wanted no other. And so intense was their opposition (it is said they appealed to the very Emperor!) that at the last moment the scene of the Congress had to be moved to Basel, in Switzerland.

That was characteristic of the German Jews. Of course, there were some among them with shrewder eyes and clearer heads, men who saw how imbecile was the whole mythology of Germanism, and how pathetic were those Jews who so frothingly espoused it. Such men openly proclaimed themselves Internationalists, or Zionists, or both (the two are not irreconcilable), and dared carry on active propaganda for their causes. But they were very few, and when the World War came they vanished completely. Their courage failed them when put to the most savage test, and, like the rest of the Jews, they marched off to die for their Fatherland. One should not blame them. Few souls in any country proved strong enough to resist the war-hysteria. Would that the charge were true that the Jews of Germany—or of any other warring land, for that matter—had the intelligence and the integrity to remain pacifists after 1914. They had not. In an hour which called for lions they showed themselves sheep, and like their fellow-nationals they went bleating to the slaughter. Twelve thousand of the Jews in Germany sacrificed their lives, and countless thousands more sacrificed their sanity. It was no mere coincidence that the most delirious anthem

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of the war, the *Hymn of Hate*, was composed by Ernst Lissauer, a Jew. . . .

### 5

And what reward did they receive for their zeal? No sooner did the war end than they found themselves blamed for everything. On the one hand it was claimed that the Jews, being by profession "international bankers," were primarily responsible for bringing on the war. On the other hand it was claimed that they, being by nature "anti-national conspirators," had betrayed Germany into bringing the war to a disastrous close. At first such silly charges were heard only from the lips of the ousted militarists, for those strutters, having led in the war, could not bear to confess that they had led badly. But soon they began to be echoed by the lower orders, and then the agitation grew ominous. A certain queer character named Adolf Hitler made himself the leader of a group whose chief shibboleth was the treachery of the Jews. He went shouting it in the beer-halls, and wherever else the disgruntled and dejected gathered. The staid, the sober, the "respectable" citizens laughed at him, for he appeared ludicrous in their eyes—then. When he attempted an insurrection in Munich in 1923, opening it by dramatically firing his revolver into the ceiling of the brewery where his cohorts were gathered, the Republican troops let loose one volley from their machine-guns, and our

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hero dodged so hard that he broke his shoulder on the paving. And the "respectable" folk laughed till the tears rolled down their cheeks.

But a decade later their tears were of another sort, for in the interim, Hitler, having dodged the bullets, had returned to the fray. He revived his "National Socialist Party," and began once more to hold forth in the beer-halls. An imitation giant, he surrounded himself with genuine pygmies, and slowly began to crowd his way forward again. Everything favored the spread of his crude doctrine. Germany, so long schooled to believe in its right to stand in the sun, lay prostrate in darkness. It had been dismembered by the Allies, buried beneath a mountain of debt, chained with a thousand galling disabilities, and bespattered with the ordure of guilt. And the Social Democrats who were now its masters were helpless. Even if they had been less inept, less muddled, less ready to compromise—even if they had been as reckless as the Communists and as unconscionable as the Fascists—even then they would have been unable to save their land. A war had been fought, and it had to be paid for. Time was needed, long years of straining in bewildered agony, before there could be healing and salvation.

But the German people, being human, were not content to wait. They could not or would not see that all the other lands, the victorious as well as the vanquished, were in almost as evil a plight. To them it seemed that

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they alone were suffering, and very naturally they blamed their government for it. The former aristocrats, having already lost their prestige, and fearing they might lose their lands as well, were from the outset hostile to the Republic. The workers, dazzled by the red fire that had been kindled in Russia, were likewise irreconcilably opposed to the Republic. And the middle-class folk, all along the bulwark of Social Democracy, grew more and more disaffected as their impoverishment increased. So far as one could see, only the Jews remained steadfast, and that was for a very good reason. Economically they fared as badly under the Republic as any other Germans of the middle class. But socially and politically they enjoyed what was for them almost a triumph. Before the War they had never been more than second-class citizens. They had been counted good enough to serve in the ranks, but not to become officers. They could become students in the universities, but only rarely, very rarely, professors. They could contribute lavishly to the funds of the various political parties, but almost never receive appointment to office. And all these disabilities were, if not swept away, at least somewhat relaxed once the Republic came into being. And that was why the Jews favored the change. Partially freed of the shackles that had so long bound them, they were able now to forge to the front. They were inordinately gifted—as to that there is no dispute—and to boot they had labored hard for the

party which was now in power. As a consequence they began to receive appointments which until then had never been granted to Jews. They became judges and police commissioners. Several served in the cabinets of the Reich and the various states. Literally scores of them attained professorships, and hundreds won minor professional posts. Strategically it was no doubt a mistake on their part. They thrust themselves into too many exposed positions; they became obtrusive. But how could they help it? Here they were, able, zealous, full of ambition—why should they deny themselves the honors they deserved? What if they did happen to be Jews? Were they not as good Germans as any Gentiles?

Apparently not—at least, so roared Hitler. As early as 1920, when he drew up the “unalterable” program of the National Socialist Party, he had written: “None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, can be citizens of the nation. Therefore no Jew can be a citizen.” He had elaborated on the point, devoting seven of the twenty-five sections in the program to the ways in which all Jews must be disfranchised, pauperized, and expatriated. This was their deserved and necessary fate because they were, he insisted, an alien element in Germany. Not that they voluntarily kept themselves alien. No, their worst sin was that they presumed to consider themselves an integral part of the nation. They dared to “pollute the blood” of the native stock by intermarrying with it, and were “corrupting its soul” by tak-

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ing part in its cultural life. Though only one percent of the population, they had "attained a mastery over the whole of it," and they must therefore be torn up root and branch and banished.

Such was Hitler's stand from the beginning, and though many of the shrewder aristocrats who later joined his party tried to make him modify it, he absolutely refused to yield. "Whoever feels he cannot go the whole way with us in the Jewish question," he declared through his mouthpiece, Gottfried Feder, "has no place in the Nazi party." \*

Hitler may have been mad, but he was no fool. He realized that an easy bait must be dangled before the masses if they were to be won over to his cause. So he went through the land crying, "Down with the Jews!" He told the people that the Jews had stabbed them in the back, and were now sucking their life-blood like vampires. The Jews had concocted the Treaty of Versailles. The Jews had brought on the terrible currency inflation. The Jews were responsible for the spread of jazz, venereal disease, skepticism, pacifism, nudism, capitalism, Communism, Freemasonry, Christian Science. . . . Anything, everything inimical to the "noble Aryan soul" was fostered by the Jews. Why? Because they were an infernal spawn bent on destroying all civilization so that they might eventually conquer the

\* *The Programme of the Party of Hitler*, tr. by E. T. S. Dugdale, Munich, 1932, p. 9.

earth. "If the Jew wins," Hitler declared in his autobiography, "his crown will be the funeral-wreath of humanity, and this planet will once again, as it did ages ago, float through space bereft of men. Eternal Nature inexorably avenges any usurpation of her realm. I believe I strive today in the spirit of the Almighty Creator. When I fight against the Jews I am doing the work of the Lord!" \*

Thus spake Hitler; and those who hearkened to him believed. They were poor, baffled, harried German underlings, and they believed because they were unable or too weary to think. Especially was this true after 1927, when the World Depression first struck Germany and unemployment became rife. Thenceforth the German common people felt completely frustrate. Their Fatherland had been brought low, their Kaiser was in exile, their savings had been swept away, and they were left poor, hungry, exasperated. They had to find some vent for their pent-up spleen—and here was the Jew flung at their feet. Naturally they were ready to believe that they had the right (because they had the might) to rend him to fragments. They had always disliked him, and had always suspected him of treachery. They had done so not alone because (for reasons which we shall go into later) dislike and suspicion of the Jew were traditional in their lowly world; but also because such sentiments had been encouraged by their betters. For at least

\* \* *Mein Kampf*, 12th Edition, p. 70.



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sixty years the reactionary German intellectuals had been proving by arguments as erudite as they were specious, that the Jew was "racially inferior," and that the "Jewish spirit" was in some mysterious metaphysical way hostile to the "Germanic spirit." A whole "science of antisemitism" had been inspired by the olympian Richard Wagner, elaborated by "savants" like Wilhelm Marr and Heinrich von Treitschke, and popularized by pseudo-philosophers like Houston Stewart Chamberlain. And these two influences, the blind prejudice rising from the depths in their own murky souls, and the strabismic "science" seeping down from the learned cloisters, made those peasants very ready to believe what the Nazi orators declaimed. If a gleam of skepticism still flickered in their dull minds, Hitler snuffed it out with the cry: "Read the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and see for yourselves how those jackals plot against us." (As though the fraudulence of those preposterous protocols had not been exposed years and years ago!) If a last gust of compassion swept through their good German hearts, Hitler's henchman, Dr. Josef Goebbels sneered: "Of course the Jew is a human being. Never has any of us doubted that. But so is the flea an animal—only not a pleasant one. And just as we feel it our duty not to guard and protect the flea so that it can bite and sting and torment us, but rather to annihilate it, so it is with the Jew!" \* And such retorts, blunt, foul-

\* *Der Nazi-Sozi*, by Dr. Josef Goebbels, Munich, 1929, p. 8.

mouthed, stunningly savage, convulsed the mobs and swept away their last hesitancies. In 1919 Hitler's party consisted of seven members. The next year there were three thousand, ten years later almost four hundred thousand, and in 1933 seventeen million Germans voted Hitler into supreme command.

### 6

And then the bestial carnival began. There is no need to recount here what occurred once the Nazis came into power. A dozen or more volumes have already been published on the subject, and it would be gratuitously harrowing to repeat what they say. All manner of physical outrages were committed against Jews. There were beatings, lootings, mass arrests, illegal imprisonments, and murders. But these were mere incidents, and they were perhaps neither as numerous nor in all cases as bestial as might have been expected under the circumstances. Hitler's followers had been promised a *Frei-nacht*, a "night of license," once he got into power; and no higher tribute can be paid to the trained decency of the German common folk than that relatively few of them tried to take advantage of that promise. Atrocities did occur—I learnt of them at first hand when I reached Germany a few weeks after the Nazi *coup d'état*—but in the light of all else that was done to the Jews, they are insignificant. Incalculably more grievous was the economic and social boycott against all Jews that was

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sanctioned by the government, and the countless laws that were passed to deprive them of almost all their civic and political rights. For these measures affected every Jew in the land. The baptized, and the children and grandchildren of the baptized, found themselves in one class with the bearded Jews just come from Poland. The Monarchists among them, and the Catholic Centrists and Social Democrats, were degraded together with the Communists. No Jew and no detectable descendant of a Jew was allowed to escape the ban.

The effect of that mass-sentence was catastrophic. At one blow it condemned all German Jewry to death—and the whole world's Jewry to life. It did that because it made clear as never before in modern history that for the Jew there was still no escaping the age-old hostility. Hundreds of thousands of them in Germany had been trying with all their might to merge with the Gentiles around them. Whether their effort was a worthy one is aside from the immediate point. It is enough that the effort was made, and on the surface not unsuccessfully. So widespread was the assimilation in Germany that instead of naturally increasing with each generation, the Jews were actually becoming fewer. Even the much-talked-of infiltration from Eastern Europe had not been able to make up for the losses due to baptism, intermarriage, and race-suicide. And among the half-million who remained in the land there was, in most instances, little save the name to distinguish them as Jews. So far

as their thoughts and their yearnings were concerned, they were characteristically Germans, or citizens of the world. The eyes of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Kurt Eisner were illumined by the light of Moscow, not Jerusalem. Walter Rathenau believed in the Weimar Constitution, not the Talmud. Einstein, Franck, and Hertz, the physicists; Willstätter and Haber, the chemists; Cantor and Minkowski, the mathematicians; Ehrlich and Wassermann, the physicians: these and their like—I could expand the list until it ran over to the next page—labored in their disciplines as scientists, not as Jews. Even in the less impersonal fields most of the German Jews who distinguished themselves—Mahler and Schönberg in music, Liebermann and Grosz in art, Ernst Toller and Franz Werfel in drama, Jakob Wassermann, Stefan Zweig, and Emil Ludwig in literature—did so as men of culture, not as Jews. There were others equally famous—for instance, Lion Feuchtwanger, Arnold Zweig, and Max Brod—whose work did reveal the direct influence of Israel's tradition. But they were the exception. The vast majority of outstanding German Jews had exceedingly little of what is called "race-consciousness"—and that little they had usually tried to deny.

But what had it availed them? Now they were all back where they or their fathers had started—in the ghetto. It made no difference whether they were baptized, or wore monocles, or bore the gashes of student

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duels, or could show medals won in the War. If but one of their grandparents was known to have been Jewish, then they too were Jewish beyond repair. The financiers among them and the hucksters, the professors and the cobblers, the Nationalists and the Communists—they were all classed together as pariahs. They were ousted from their offices or terrorized in their counting-houses. Their "Aryan" wives were urged to divorce them, and their "Aryan" friends cut them dead. They were expelled from their clubs and professional societies; their children were segregated in the schools and universities. In many communities they were even forbidden to bathe in the public pools!

And thereupon they were forced to halt and consider. Two courses were open to them. They could either plead and whine, or else accept their fate and start over again. Many chose the former course—and still pathetically adhere to it. Even today myriads of those "non-Aryans" in Germany are still running at the heels of the Nazis and whimpering to be accepted on any terms. They insist that they are before and beyond all else, German Nationalists, and they grovel and kiss the rod of their brown-shirted masters.

But there are those who show stouter hearts and clearer heads. They see that they will remain Jews no matter what they do or say—that they have always been Jews in the eyes of the Gentiles. So they take up their cross (it is still a cross even though it be hooked and

called a swastika) and march on to their resurrection. Some take it up with heavy hearts for they know that henceforth there can be no peace for them. Because of that hooked cross they will have to live on as Jews apparently throughout eternity. And the prospect does not gladden them. . . . But there are others who take up the cross with mocking defiance, as though relieved that they know at last where they belong. I talked with many such Jews when I was last in Germany, and I was astounded to see how they had changed since earlier days. Their speech crackled with "gallows-humor"—that characteristically Jewish humor which struggles to laugh off a sob. They took a grim delight in using half-forgotten Hebrew phrases. For these men and women who all their lives had tried to flee their past, were now returning to it with bitter passion. "If we must be Jews," they cried, "then we shall be Jews with a vengeance. The time is past for us to ask, *ma yomru ha-goyim?* 'What will the Gentiles say?' They have said enough; it is now for us to answer. And our answer is: 'We are done with striving to live side by side with you like brethren. We shall return to the land of our fathers, and be for ourselves alone!'" . . . And these were no empty words. Proud and prosperous burghers who had once regarded Palestine as an empty corner of a remote wilderness were now actually preparing to settle there. Hitler had done that which a thousand Herzls could never have accomplished: he had made

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Zionists of those "German Citizens of the Jewish Persuasion." It was inevitable. The errant Christian who repents the evil of his ways will spite the devil by entering a monastery. But the chastened Jew will make an even more extravagant gesture—he will flee back back to the ghetto. And Germany is full of chastened Jews today.

### 7

The whole world is full of them. Wherever we dwell, be it in Shanghai or Buenos Aires, we Jews are a chastened lot today. No catastrophe in all our history has shaken us as this in Germany. Had it occurred in Roumania or Turkey or Persia, our hearts would have been troubled, but we would have felt very little terror. We would have said, as we have had to say scores of times in the past, that no better was to be looked for in lands still part-barbaric. But it has occurred in the heart of Europe, in the land of Goethe, Kant, and Lessing! Can you wonder that we are panic-stricken? We feel ourselves menaced no matter where we live. We see the front of savagery advancing. Yesterday it was on the Vistula, and today it is on the Rhine. Who knows where it will be tomorrow?

We are afraid, and with good reason. If such a thing could happen in Germany, why can it not happen elsewhere? After all, the Germans are not very different from other Gentiles. Their reasons for turning on the Jews could be urged just as illogically by any other peo-

ple. We are everywhere a minority obtrusively energetic and irritatingly able. In every land we appear somehow alien, and with it insurgent. It may be true that the particular circumstances in Germany were in a measure exceptional. Aversion to the Jew had been an organized cult there ever since the nation began to strut as an empire; and in the hour of adversity it was only natural that that cult should break loose and flood the whole land. Germany had been driven mad by defeat, and it was only because of that madness that it flung itself on the Jews. . . . Quite true. But how can we be sure that the rest of the nations will not go mad? Indeed, what with this prolonged economic chaos, are not most of them half-mad even today? If national distress and frustration are the breeders of Judophobia, then all the world may yet succumb to that distemper. Much of Europe has already succumbed to it. The Republic of Poland was born with the infection, and so were Lithuania and Latvia. Roumania, too, has always harried the Jews; and Hungary raised a Horthy to power before Hitler had even a party. More recently Austria has fallen prey to the disease, and Greece, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland appear to be coming down with it. Certain of these nations may still raise their hands in horror at the outrages perpetrated by the Nazis in Germany; but in most cases those hands are themselves stained with Jewish blood. And that is why we are in despair. Each day brings report of how the epi-



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demic is spreading. From Brussels, Johannesburg, Quebec, Tokio, come ever-fresh tales of the agitation against us. And we know not if we are safe anywhere.

Even in France we feel insecure, for how long is it since the Dreyfus Affair? That incident, we now realize, was but the first act of what might have eventuated in a catastrophe almost as tragic for us as the Nazi upheaval. The circumstances leading up to both were alarmingly similar. France had lost a war, and the resultant disaffection encouraged the reactionaries to plot the overthrow of the liberal régime. True to form, their first resort was to raise the age-old cry of Jewish treachery. The Jews, they declared, were responsible for all that had befallen the nation. It was the Jews who had betrayed France in the War of 1870, and had caused the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. It was the Jews, too, who were now running the republican government, and were corrupting and impoverishing the whole land. And to prove their point they trumped up a case against one particular Jew, and successfully condemned him to life-imprisonment for high treason. That Jew was a brilliant young army captain named Alfred Dreyfus who, ironically, had always been as genuinely proud of his French allegiance as he had been covertly ashamed of his Jewish birth. He proved, however, a redoubtable victim. With the aid of his devoted family, and a group of courageous men like Zola and Clemenceau, he set all France by the ears. For twelve years he was the cause of

incessant agitation; and finally, he triumphed and received full exoneration. Had he failed—and with the powers of darkness so remorselessly opposed to him it was little less than a miracle that he did not fail—no one knows what might have happened to his people.

Even as it was, so intense an animosity was aroused against the Jews in the course of those years that to this day it has not died out in France. There are still millions in that land who say there must have been fire where there was so much smoke. Dreyfus may have established his innocence, but in the popular mind the Jews are still guilty. Treachery, it is imagined, is born in us; it is a *fatalité du type*. And though at the moment—but more because of hatred for Germany than love for us—we are riding a wave of popularity in France, we know it is a foul-weather popularity, and realize its worth. . . .

Happily there are countries on earth where we have never been subjected to experiences like that Dreyfus Affair. There is England with its dominions, and Holland with its colonies, and of course the United States. But even in these countries we have our dreads. Thus far all has gone well, but we do not know what the morrow may bring. The prominent statesmen—especially in England—and the leaders of opinion have been outspoken in their condemnation of the Jew-baiting in Germany; and we have been no little heartened by those protests. They have been to us like bright fires on a

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wintry night, and gratefully have we reached out our hands toward them. But we see that beyond those circles there is a storm brewing, and we fear that if it breaks it may yet put out the fires. Perhaps we are foolish to have such terrors; but our bitter history has taught us the wisdom of such folly. Liberalism may be a rooted spirit among the enlightened in these lands; but the enlightened are relatively few in number. The masses here as everywhere else are still credulous and easily moved to berserker rage. Moreover, Nazi propagandists are now agitating among them, and there is no telling what may yet ensue. Times are bad and there is no assurance that they will soon be much better. There is unemployment and want and widespread frustration. The common folk know that something is wrong, and lack both wit and will to discover what it is. They crave a nostrum to cure the complex ills in our economic order, some simple remedy in which they can (for the moment) put their faith. And there is such a remedy near at hand, a remedy hallowed by time and now impressively bottled in Nazi Germany. "Down with the Jews!"—that is the proffered cure-all. And it may yet be swallowed in these democracies.

That is why we Jews are so taut and nervous today. We see that we are beset as never before since medieval times. And therefore the cry goes up: "To your tents, O Israel!" Yesterday the majority of us were content to wander, confident that the age of bigotry was past.

But today we are drawing together again. Jews who had drifted so far from the fold that they seemed altogether lost, are now of a sudden returning. Distinguished men like Lord Melchett of England—only a half-Jew by birth and altogether a Christian by rearing—and Arnold Schönberg, the composer, are formally returning to the synagogue. Others like Emil Ludwig, the biographer, and Ralph D. Blumenfeld, the famed "Dean of Fleet Street," are now publicly aligning themselves with the Jewish cause. And all of us, the returned prodigals no less than those who never wandered, are now proclaiming, even obtruding, our Jewishness. There is a stock character in ghetto literature, that of the illiterate old Jew who listens to the reading of the daily newspaper and anxiously asks as each item of news is explained to him: "*Nu, nu*, is that good for the Jews, or not good?" We have all of us become like that old man. Whatever occurs, be it a shift in the balance of power at Geneva or the appointment of a new superintendent in the local high school, invariably we are moved to ask: "Is that good for the Jews, or not good?"

And therein lies the deepest guilt of our persecutors. They harry us into living lives that are cramped and apprehensive. They will not let us choose our interests as other men may choose them. They will not let us do our daily tasks with whole hearts and single minds. Whether we be measurers of stars or gatherers of rags,

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our first thought must always be that we are Jews. And this is a great evil. The consciousness of one's birth should be at most a subtle rhythm in one's innermost being; but with us it is made instead a confusing roar. Wherever we turn, it blares in our ears, so that we are moved to shout in the hope of drowning it out. That is what we are doing today. We are shouting (in our hearts if not with our lips), for the clamor against us is beyond bearing. We are reasserting our pride so long hushed, or even forgotten. We who sought to be other than ourselves, are being ourselves now with a vengeance. We can't help it. *We have to be!*

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### WHAT JEWS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE

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IF the history of the Jews permits of one generalization, it is this: whenever we have been stiff-necked and have tried to stay apart, the Gentiles have tried to swallow us up; but no sooner have we weakened and asked to be swallowed up, than the Gentiles have recoiled and made us stay apart. Now this needs explaining. Why is it that, of all the minorities on the face of the earth, this one almost alone is accorded such a fate? What is there in the Jew that makes him so unworthy to live and yet so unable to die?

In the past there would have been but one answer to such a question. The mark of the Jew, it would have been said, is his religion, and the good reason for the world's persistent aversion to him is his own stubborn clinging to that religion. The medievals, for example, were quite definite on that point. They saw, or at least said they saw, no fault in the Jew save his obstinate denial of the Son of God. And they swore holy oaths that, if he would but cleanse himself of that fault, he would straightway be regarded as the equal of all other men. It was imperative that they offer him such an

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assurance, for Christian teaching commanded it. Even St. Augustine, the severest of the Church Fathers, had declared that "all can be saved if they wish." If the baptismal water could make children of light out of blue-painted savages, surely it could do no less for the "blood-relatives" of Christ.

Such was the theory, and one must grant it was in a measure generous. But, as we have seen, when rigorously tested it usually broke down. Though their infidelism seemed a *good* reason for the aversion to the Jews, it was apparently not the *real* reason. Otherwise why was it that whenever great numbers of them sought to enter the Church, they were still set apart? Obviously religion was not the only thing that differentiated them. There was something else, something so fundamental and ineradicable that not even the charismatic powers which could turn bread into Christ's body could turn a Jew into a Gentile. And this fact, consistently denied in Christian teaching but almost as consistently admitted in Christian practice, is now no longer denied. None save the purblind among either Jews or Gentiles would still try to argue that the sole distinction between them is one of religion. In the first place, there are millions of Jews today who profess no religion whatsoever. In the second place, a number of those who do profess a religion are devotees—in name if not also at heart—of Christianity or of Islam or of one of the modern healing cults. In the third place, many of those who do actually

profess Judaism have so modified that religion that theologically and ritually they have more in common now with the Unitarians than with their own Orthodox brethren. If it were true that only his stubborn clinging to the Mosaic faith makes a Jew a Jew, then atheists like Trotzky, agnostics like Einstein, Moslems like the Dönme in Turkey, Catholics like the Chuetas in Majorca, Protestants like so many of the "non-Aryans" who have had to flee from Germany, and any number of Jews who are devotees of Anglicanism, Unitarianism, Humanism, and Christian Science, would all of them be Gentiles!

Nor is that the sole reason why another basis of distinction has had to be discovered. If religion were all that differentiated Jews from other men, it would not be easy in this secular age to sustain an intense prejudice against them. Thanks to the costly wars of the seventeenth century, and the caustic writings of the eighteenth, religious intolerance has fallen out of favor. Even the vulgar have learnt to feel that theological differences are no longer a fit excuse for hostilities. But that is not true of racial differences: these, far from losing their potency, have become more capable than ever of arousing popular passion. And that may in part explain why Jew-baiting in recent years has shifted its base of rationalization from the sector of theology to that of anthropology. It is maintained that a Jew is a Jew because of what he is, not because of what he be-



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believes. It is his heredity that sets him apart from the Gentiles, and no matter how he may accommodate himself to his environment, that heredity remains unchanged. He is a "Semite," and can never be anything else. It is in his "blood."

### 2

The genesis of that line of reasoning is notorious. It arose like a fungoid growth on certain theories which enjoyed a vogue in learned circles some two generations ago. At that time it was thought possible to sort out humanity as the zoölogists had already sorted out the lower animals. It was imagined that the countless geographical and cultural groups cluttering the earth might be so many distinct "breeds"; and scientists set themselves the task of discovering objective criteria by which to demarcate these "breeds." They made statistical studies of the prevailing color, height, head-formation, hair-growth, and other physical traits in different localities. Also they studied the various religions, art-forms, and languages. And on the basis of such data they tried to resolve all humanity into its constituent hereditary elements.

It was a magnificent conception, and in the beginning it gave promise of yielding all sorts of new truths. But before long almost all the conclusions of the pioneer ethnologists became as obsolete as the theories of the alchemists. At the present time the very name "ethnol-

ogy" is under a cloud. Reputable investigators in the field prefer to describe themselves as anthropologists, for it is on *anthropos*, "man," not on *ethnos*, "race," that they concentrate their study. So far as racial classification is concerned, they are content to speak of certain generalized "ethnic types" such as the Nordics, the Alpines, and the Mediterraneans. Further than that they do not presume to go, for they have too little to point the way. What were originally taken to be objective and constant criteria of heredity are now seen to be either subjective or vacillating—or both.

This was obvious almost from the start with regard to the cultural traits. For example, language was very early discarded as a dependable index. The more critical even of the founders of ethnology could see that the fact that a people spoke, let us say, an Aryan language, did not necessarily imply that it was of Aryan "blood." The people might have adopted that language at some forgotten time in the past.

And in like fashion later investigators have been moved to question the trustworthiness even of a people's physical traits. For instance, they have found that the shape of the head, all along regarded as a most dependable hereditary trait, is actually a most treacherous one. Infants can be made either "dolichocephalic" (narrow-skulled) or "brachycephalic" (broad-skulled) simply by training them to sleep on their sides in the one case, or on their backs in the other. Instances are on record of monozygotic twins—pairs which must have

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an absolutely identical heredity—one of whom is strikingly long-headed and the other of whom is as strikingly round-headed. Apparently climate too can affect the head-shape, for, as Professor Franz Boas has shown, the "cephalic index" of immigrants in the United States is perceptibly different from that of their immediate kinsmen in the home-countries.

Nor have the other physical traits proved much more dependable. Either they are subject to environmental influences (in which case they point in the wrong direction) or else they are hopelessly scattered (in which case they point nowhere at all). Even blood is no index to racial origin. Common folk may go on saying that "blood will tell"—but as yet the anthropologists have failed to make it do more than agglutinate. They have learnt from this agglutination (which is an exceedingly serious matter when it occurs in a transfusion) that there actually are four different types of human blood. But thus far they have been able to establish only the vaguest connection between these types and any racial groupings. Perhaps such a connection did exist at some very remote period in human history; but if it did, it has long since been destroyed. And this is quite understandable, for the peoples of the earth have been moving about for countless thousands of years, and in their moving they have mingled and interbred. Within historic times there have been Mongoloid Huns ravaging in Central Europe, and Nordic Goths committing rapine in the Balkans and Spain. There are plain traces of

Arab "blood" from Provence to Java, and of Frankish "blood" from Syria to the Klondike. What is happening in America before our very eyes has been happening all over the world for perhaps half a million years. For example, throughout North Africa there has been so much cross-breeding that it is now impossible to decide whether the inhabitants there are more Negroid or more Caucasian. And in a measure that is true almost everywhere else, for the whole earth has always been one vast "melting pot." A single Phœnician trader who came to Cornwall to buy tin, and who remained there to rear a family, might conceivably be responsible for a Phœnician strain in the veins of every living Britisher. A solitary Nubian woman brought home as a slave by a German Crusader would have started a line which by now has "colored" the blood of all Central Europe. This may sound fantastic, but plain arithmetic proves it true. Reckon out the number of your ancestors a thousand years ago—you must multiply by two at least forty times—and you will find that, allowing for inbreeding, the sum will equal the population of the entire world at that time!

That is why no sober anthropologists still think of attempting inventories of all the races on earth. They realize the task is quite as futile as trying to count the angels on a needle-point. For there aren't any clearly demarcated races. At most there are only vaguely differentiated racial blends. Terms like "Aryan" and "Sem-

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itic" have therefore been handed back to the philologists from whom they were borrowed—only to be discarded by these in turn, for philology too has outgrown its early passion for inventories. And labels like "Anglo-Saxon," "Teutonic," and "Hebraic," have been returned to the archeologists—and the orators. The scientists no longer have any use for such tags.

But unhappily those scientists could do no more than discard those tags; they could not possibly obliterate them. And knaves and fools (they are ever at the heels of the scientists) have since gathered them up and made a pseudo-science of them. Like scavengers they have retrieved the cast-off theories on anthropology's refuse-heap, and are now peddling them as fresh truths. And they find ready markets for the trash. The old theological pabulum has lost its savor for the populace. There is wide craving now for "scientific facts." And the hucksters pander to that craving. It is not that these hucksters are consciously wicked men. In most instances they themselves believe the myths they retail, for, like the ill-educated folk to whom they cater, they have no critical sense. They take the tentative suppositions of the nineteenth-century ethnologists as established truths; and with the help of their own recklessly inventive minds, they patch those suppositions together, expand and embroider them, and then pass them on as a definitive gospel.

According to this gospel it is possible not merely to

sort out all mankind into a multitude of distinct races, but also to arrange them in a precise qualitative order. At the bottom of the scale are the races most resembling the apes, and at the top are those most unlike them. Accordingly the Negroes must represent the lowest type of human being, for they have the dark coloring, the round skull, the prognathous jaw, and the receding forehead of the anthropoids. The highest by the same token must be the Nordics, for they are blond, blue-eyed, narrow-skulled, and straight-jawed. Somewhere between these two extremes must come the Mongols, the Semites, the Latins, and the rest of the races. Such is the neat arrangement worked out by these "racial experts," and it appears so logical that it is readily accepted by most people—if they are Nordics. To the critical, however, its falsity is obvious, for the whole arrangement clearly depends upon the particular traits to which attention is called. If one selects other traits, then any number of arrangements become every whit as logical. For example, if one concentrates on the fact that apes are characteristically hairy, then the beardless Mongols are at the top of the human scale, the Negroes are not far below, and the whiskery Nordics are down at the bottom. Similarly if one concentrates on the thin grayish lips of the simians, then the Negroes with their thick red lips are at the top, the Nordics are hardly half-way up, and this time the Mongols are at the bottom. Or again, if heed is given to the flat and inconspicuous

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noses of almost all apes, then—at least according to the caricaturists—it is the Jews who come out on top!

It is utterly impossible—at least on the basis of our present very limited knowledge—to grade the various races of man. It is impossible even to separate them one from another. But the exponents of "racialism" fail to see this. Probably it is because they cannot afford to see it, for they have a vested interest in their pseudo-science. They are themselves Nordics pandering to other Nordics—or at least "Aryans" pandering to other "Aryans"—and they feel that strict truth may well be dispensed with if it spoils a proof of the superiority of their own kind. And those to whom they pander have neither wit nor will to disagree. After all, why look a red-herring in the mouth? Here is a thing such people have been awaiting for years, a "scientific" validation of their aversion to those who are unlike themselves. In earlier generations they were able to jeer, "Heathen!" or "Infidel!" But the waning of religious zeal has robbed those names of their sting. How convenient therefore that a new vocabulary of prejudice should have been created! Now they can call all aliens "racial inferiors." . . .

### 3

It is no mere coincidence that this whole pseudo-science of race should be largely of German manufacture. There was demand in that country for such a concoction, for a new excuse had to be found there for the

lingering prejudice against the Jew. The old excuse that they were a stubbornly clannish element had lost its pertinence by the end of the nineteenth century. Many of them had already become completely assimilated, and the rest were rapidly drifting in that direction. Yet, as in Spain and Portugal when so many Jews submitted to conversion, there was still an intense antipathy toward them. And this antipathy had to be rationalized. Some good reason had to be discovered why the Jew still deserved to be looked down upon, no matter how indistinguishable he was from a Gentile. And that was what stimulated the development of "racial science." Its propagators excogitated universal generalizations primarily in order to justify a particular prejudice. And, according to their lights, they succeeded.

Expressed in the appropriately vulgar language of their followers, the basic doctrine was:

"Was der Jude glaubt ist einerlei,  
In der Rasse liegt die Schweinerei." \*

That rhyme has now become as familiar in Germany as any Bible proverb. One hears it bawled in all the beer-halls, and prattled in all the schools. And at least a part of it would go undisputed almost everywhere else on earth. Even most of my fellow-Jews would agree that their distinctiveness, whether swinish or otherwise, does

\* "What the Jew believes is immaterial; in the race lies the swinishness."



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indeed inhere in their heredity. For they too are persuaded that they belong to a separate race—and a peculiarly “pure” one to boot. They like to speak of themselves as the “children of Abraham,” forgetting that all the other human beings on earth must be equally the descendants of any individual living four thousand years ago. And when they are denigrated by antisemites, their favorite retort is: “When our ancestors were writing the Prophecies and singing the Psalms, your ancestors were painted savages dancing before idols!” For as they see it, the blood-stream of Jewry has run clear and undefiled from Bible times to the present day.

### 4

But that is of course absurd. Even in the very earliest period there was considerable interbreeding between the Hebrews and the peoples around them. Moses was not above taking a wife from among the Cushites, apparently a Negro people.\* The great King David, he from whose loins the future Messiah was to spring, was himself descended from a Gentile woman named Ruth. His son Solomon filled his harem with princesses from many foreign lands, and so did the later kings of the land. And even if such formal intermarriage was largely confined to the ruling class—which is by no means certain—there could have been no such limitation on casual intermating. One must remember that the main cara-

\* *Numbers* 12:1.

van-route between Africa and Asia ran through the length of Palestine, and strangers were therefore continually traversing the land. Foreign traders came and went in a never-ending stream, leaving behind them a trail not alone of their wares, but also of their seed. And even more influential must have been the foreign troops, for they stayed longer and were more importunate. Egypt, Philistia, Assyria, Aramea, Scythia, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome—they all sent their legions storming through Palestine. Sometimes the invading hosts were repelled; but more often they prevailed and quartered themselves on the land. And in either case they did not fail to leave their mark on the native population. What went on in Belgium during the German invasion, and in the Ruhr and the Rhineland during the Allied Occupation, went on in Palestine for more than a thousand years. There was rapine and seduction—and bastardy. Long before we Jews made our last stand against the Romans we must already have been a very mixed lot racially.

And once we were driven from Palestine, this confusion in our blood could have become only more confounded. True, we did try to keep ourselves secluded; but our success was never more than approximate. That was because, for one thing, we saw no wrong in intermarrying with proselytes. Though we refused to mingle with the people outside our fortress of the Holy Law, we were never averse to mingling with such as cared to

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join us inside that fortress. And so many joined in the early centuries of the present era that when Dio Cassius, the Latin historian, sought to define the term "Jew," he could only say that it described any person who abided by the Jewish customs, irrespective of his or her racial origin. We know that even members of the Imperial household threw in their lot with us, and that whole tribes—for example the Khazars in South Russia—became part of our fold. And after the final triumph of Christianity we continued to gain converts, if not among our neighbors, at least among our slaves.

And intermarriage with proselytes was only one of the channels through which foreign strains found their way into our blood-stream. Even more effective was the intermingling with chance seducers or assailants, for this must have gone on all the time. We were a minority wherever we dwelt, and when beset by mobs we were helpless to protect our women. An attack on a ghetto in medieval times—and even in modern times in Eastern Europe—was marked not alone by looting and massacre, but also by rapine. Often the poor Jewesses, out of their minds because of what had been done to them, took their lives or fled in shame. But more often they remained to bear their bastard children, finding forgiving or unwary husbands to give them a name. History is largely silent on such incidents, for they are almost always kept secret, and their memory dies with those who suffered them. But they occurred none the less, and

in every land where we dwelt, and in every age from ancient times to the present day.

### 5

And between intermarriage and intermating so much strange blood has seeped into our veins that today it is utterly impossible to isolate anything that can be described as a Jewish strain. On the contrary, all the painstaking serological research of recent years has as yet failed to prove anything save that the Jewish population in each region tends to show very much the same proportion of the four basic blood-types as does the local non-Jewish population. For example, Professor Rybashkin of Kharkov has found that the serological ratio among the Jews in Russia is 1.7, in Poland 1.9, and in Berlin it is 2.7—a variation which closely coincides with that among the non-Jews in those countries, for their indices in the same order are 1.4; 1.5; and 2.1.\* In each region, it will be noticed, there is some slight difference between the ratio of the four blood-types among the Jews and that among the non-Jews. Both groups show racial blending, but the two blends are not absolutely alike. However—and this is the important point—there is usually far less difference between the Jewish and the Gentile blends in any one

\* *Voprosy Biologii e Patologii Yevrei*, 2nd Series, Leningrad, 1928. All other investigators without exception have found similar approximations between the blood-typing of Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors.

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country, than there is between the Jewish blends in two different countries. To give a concrete instance, the ratio of the four blood-types among the Jews in Germany is nearer to that among the Gentiles there than it is to that among the Jews in Italy. That is why the Nazis have been forced to depend on birth-records and local gossip to find out just who is of "non-Aryan" origin and who is not. They can learn nothing of such matters by examining the blood of the suspected individuals, for their blood has become mixed beyond all recognition.

And the same is true of every other biological characteristic. Complexion, hair-growth, head-formation, features, stature, fecundity, morbidity—in all these traits we Jews show almost as much variety as the non-Jews. It is only a superstition that there is a distinct Jewish type all over the world. Actually there are all sorts of Jewish types, and the unlikeness between any two of them is usually far greater than the unlikeness between each and its neighboring Gentile type. Some Jews are as swarthy as Arabs, and some are as fair as Swedes; some are thoroughly Negroid, and some are real Chinese. There are people who boast that they can almost always recognize a Jew by his features; but they are little more to be believed than those medieval monks who insisted that they could infallibly detect a Jew by his smell. Actually those "Jewish features" are quite as elusive as any *foetor Judaicus* could be. One has no

difficulty in recognizing an Orthodox Jew in Eastern Europe or the Orient; but that is primarily because of his beard and earlocks and his distinctive costume. An assimilated Jew, however, can only rarely be recognized, and then not so much by his features as by his name, occupation, interests, social acquaintances, and his reaction to the word "Hitler." So far as physiognomical characteristics alone are concerned, such a person is (in the preponderantly Anglo-Saxon countries) at most perhaps vaguely "foreign-looking." He may have the coloring of a Latin, or the broad cheek-bones of a Slav, or the sharp features of an Armenian. But never is he in any distinct and exclusive way Jewish.

For, I repeat, there is no distinct "Jewish physiognomy." Devastating as it may be to most caricaturists, not even aquilinity of nose is characteristic of us. On the contrary, elaborate studies made in various parts of the world clearly show that the most common type of nose among Jews is the straight, or Greek variety! That may go counter to what any man can see with his own eyes—but so does the scientific fact that the earth goes round the sun. The difficulty is that the ordinary man sees only what he has been taught to look for. Dr. Maurice Fishberg tells us in his excellent anthropological study called *The Jews* that among 2,836 adult male Jews whom he examined in New York City, 57.26% had straight noses, 22.07% had snub ones, and only 14.25% had *aquiline ones*. (The rest, 6.42%, had

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flat and broad Negroid noses.) And among 1,284 Jewesses there he found the percentage of straight noses even higher (59.42%) and of aquiline noses lower (12.70%). Other investigators before and since Dr. Fishberg have arrived at similar findings. Moreover they have discovered that in this, as in all other physical traits, the Jews in each region seem to take after the non-Jews who surround them. For example, in Poland and the Ukraine, where the snub-nose is quite common, the Jews too are frequently snub-nosed; but in Bavaria, where the hooked nose is common, there the Jews are most strikingly hook-nosed.

How the idea arose that all Jews have long curved noses is a mystery. Certainly it was not true of the ancient Hebrews, for, judged from the carvings on archeological remains, they had short straight noses. (And, significantly, so do most of the Bedouin Arabs today—and these “Semites” are supposed to have maintained themselves in a singularly “pure” state since ancient times.) It was the Hittites in what is now Armenia who were strikingly hooked-nose, and they were as foreign to the Hebrews as the Swedes are to the Italians. Undoubtedly we Jews in the course of our ancient wanderings did come in long and close contact with the descendants of those Hittites; and a sufficient number of us may have thus acquired the spectacular Hittite proboscis to give the impression, once we reached Europe, that all Jews were thus adorned. And thereafter there

was no correcting the error. The beaked nose became the common symbol for the Jew; and the common symbol it will ever remain—until science can outshout caricature.

Much the same thing can be said of our complexion. It is popularly supposed that almost all Jews are brunette, and this is true in regions where the non-Jews are prevailingly dark. For instance, less than 1% of the Jews settled among the Tartar hillfolk of Transcaucasia are blond, and less than 5% of those who live in Italy. But in Germany Professor Virchow found that among 75,000 Jewish school-children 32% were fair-haired and 46% had light eyes. As large a proportion of blonds was found among the Jews in Austria, and almost as large a one among those in England. Even in the United States more than 44% of the Jews examined by Dr. Fishberg were fair-eyed. So in coloring as in the shape of the nose we Jews are obviously influenced by the particular people among whom we dwell.

And that is likewise true with regard to head-formation. Twenty-odd years ago, when Dr. Fishberg published his comprehensive study on the Jews, it was believed that this trait was absolutely hereditary. We know better now, but Dr. Fishberg's findings on the subject are nevertheless worth noting. He offers ample statistical evidence to prove that in North Africa and Arabia, where the non-Jews are predominantly narrow-skulled,



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the Jews likewise are inclined to be narrow-skulled; in Europe, where the general population tends to be medium-skulled, the Jews do too; and in Asia, where the round skull predominates, the Jews also are characteristically round-skulled. The parallelism holds true even in the various sections within each continent. For example, in Lithuania, where the "cephalic index" among the non-Jews is 81.88, among the Jews it is 81.05; but as one goes south it increases in both groups until in Galicia it averages 84.4 for the non-Jews and 83.33 for the Jews.

Similarly with regard to stature. Although poverty is known to stunt growth, the Roumanian Jews, who live in indescribable wretchedness, are on the average taller than the Italian Jews, who live in relative comfort. And this paradox is explained by the fact that the Gentiles among whom the Roumanian Jews dwell are taller than those who surround the Italian Jews. . . .

### 6

I could go on thus and show a like variation in every other hereditary trait. But this is not a treatise on anthropology, and enough evidence has already been presented to prove the fundamental contention that we Jews are in no sense a distinct race. In blood as in bone and flesh we are so varied among ourselves, and so like the various peoples in whose midst we have dwelt, that at the very most we can be described as a multiplicity of

racial blends. And there can be but one way of accounting for this multiplicity: *wherever we have lived we have interbred with our neighbors*. That may come to the ordinary Jew as a most unsavory deduction. Even Jews of intelligence have tended to fight shy of it. They are reluctant to surrender the flattering belief that their lineage is "pure," and that the blood of the Bible worthies runs unpolluted in their veins. And some among them—for instance, the late Joseph Jacobs—have tried to explain away the gross physical dissimilarities among Jews by saying that these may be due to artificial selection. They argue that in a region where the general population was prevailingly blond, the Jews there tended to breed *among themselves* toward blondness. They did this, it is explained, both for "protective coloration" and also because it was only natural for them to adopt the prejudices of the people surrounding them. But that presupposes that the Jews started out impure, or otherwise how could they have had in them the capacity for developing blondness? . . . Besides, how is the variation in a hidden trait like "blood-grouping" to be accounted for on the basis of such artificial selection? Even if it be granted that we Jews consciously strove to look like the Gentiles, it is inconceivable that we aspired to make our blood capable of transfusing with theirs. For transfusions were not thought of until a very few years ago, and no one even suspected the existence of those four different

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types of human blood. . . . And in any case, if selection is capable of producing the variety seen among the Jews, then the whole concept of race has no meaning. If a people can without interbreeding become blond in one region, swarthy in another, yellow in a third, and black in a fourth, then heredity counts for almost nothing. It is environment that is all-important.

But obviously environment is of only limited potency, and certain traits are unmistakably carried in the seed. Therefore, offensive as it may be to sentimentalists, there is no avoiding the conclusion that the Jews (like the Gentiles) are products of interbreeding. No matter how proudly seclusive we may have been throughout the past, there was no keeping foreign blood from seeping into our families. And once it got in, it could not easily get out again, for our continued seclusiveness made almost charmed circles of those families. Each foreign strain remained captive and was ploughed in until it became pervasive; and if it was refreshed with sufficient frequency, it finally became dominant.

Thus perhaps is explained the existence of Jewish groups which are definitely "colored." For example, there are the Bene-Israel of India, who are indisputably Jews and yet unmistakably Hindus. I have visited their schools and synagogues in and around Bombay, and have gone into their homes and joined in their celebrations. So far as observance of the Holy Law is concerned they are the counterpart of Orthodox Jews

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throughout the rest of the world. Yet in coloring, features, and stature most of them were (to me) indistinguishable from the people surrounding them. This, they assured me, was solely because I was a stranger. A native, they said, would have no difficulty in recognizing them as members of a non-Hindu race. For, according to the claim of these Bene-Israel, they are by heredity pure white, and only their long residence in India has made them take on the likeness of their neighbors. They are all descended, they maintain, from a company of Jewish traders who were wrecked on the Indian coast more than a thousand years ago. And, says one of their historians:

The sudden degradation from the happy lot which the Bene Israels enjoyed at home, to a state of utter destitution caused by shipwreck; the removal of their residence from a cool province like Palestine to the hot regions of India; the deterioration from their high mode of living in their mother-country to that of the poorest one on the Konkan [coast]; the change in their food from dainties to dry morsels; the removal from palatial buildings to wretched huts; the alteration in their dress from scarlet and crimson to rough country-made cloths; and the uneasiness caused by the dread of being killed or persecuted in a strange land—all these tended to mar the beauty of skin and hair.\*

\* The quotation is from a lengthy article written by an anonymous Bene-Israelite and printed, apparently, in one of the periodicals which the group used to publish (intermittently) some years ago. Unfortunately I have it only in the form of clippings pasted into an old scrapbook given me, together with many other documents, by the late Khan Bahadur Jacob B. Israel, when I visited Bombay in 1933.

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There is something very sad about that naïve explanation. It reveals how profoundly those Hindu Jews have been affected by the prejudice of their white overlords. But, reluctant as one may be to rob them of their dear illusion, the fact remains that so gross a physical change cannot be accounted for solely by climate and poverty. The Bene-Israel may indeed have their origin in an ancient colony of Jewish traders, for we know that there was a chain of such colonies all the way from Gaul to China in the Dark Ages. But though the descendants of those colonists may have held themselves aloof from the natives around them—a practice not especially difficult in that caste-ridden country—nevertheless it was impossible for them to keep their stock absolutely pure. The primitive Aryans who invaded India were also white, and it is said that they developed the whole idea of caste primarily in order to prevent intermarriage with the blacks whom they found there. (The word for caste in Sanskrit is *varnu*, meaning “color.”) But just as the stratagem failed in their case, so also did it fail in the case of these Jews. For laws are no match for lust.

One need only inquire into the traditional customs of the Bene-Israel to see how all efforts at segregation could not but be frustrated. At some unknown time in the past the community split into two distinct castes, one called *goro*, “white,” because its members were reputedly of pure lineage, and the other called *kala*, “black,” because its members were known to be half-

breeds. To this day there are sharp restraints on inter-marriage between the two groups, and until a generation ago the "whites" would not even eat together with the "blacks," and would not count them as part of the quorum in synagogue services. Yet the members of both groups are now equally dark-skinned, and only by prying into a Bene-Israelite's family history can one tell if he belongs to one caste or the other. If as far back as seven generations ago one of his ancestors was a Hindu, he is considered a *kala*. If, however, the bar-sinister is eight generations old, then the taint is considered removed, and he becomes eligible to marry a *goro*. And thus we see one of the overt ways in which the "white" caste took on its dark pigmentation. In the course of the centuries so much native blood seeped through the *kala* into the *goro* group that finally the whole community took on the native coloring.

A similar history probably accounts for the black skins and frizzy hair of the Falasha Jews in Abyssinia—there are said to be fifty thousand of them there today—and for the yellow skins and almond eyes of the remaining Chinese Jews around Kaifeng-fu. It is only because their immigrant ancestors happened to settle among peoples who were not Caucasians, that these groups appear so unlike the bulk of Jewry. So far, however, as admixture of blood is concerned, probably no greater degree of it exists in them than in any others. On the contrary, since the Jewish stock was markedly

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brunette to begin with, it must have taken a great deal more cross-breeding to produce the blond Jews so common in Europe, than those black Jews in Africa and India, or those yellow Jews in China. But the precise degree of admixture is unimportant. All that counts is that admixture is universal, and that hereditarily every Jew is part-Gentile—even as every Gentile is part-Jew. Therefore it is preposterous to try to explain (and sanction) the hostility between them on the ground that it is dictated by “instincts of race.” There is indisputably a cleavage between the two groups, but it is no more due to their blood than to the stars.

### 7

Nor is the cleavage due to any national differences. There was a time when all Jews were indeed members of a separate nation, but that was many centuries ago. And though some among us, the Political Zionists, hope some day to restore that nation, there seems little chance that they will soon succeed. Astounding things have been accomplished by the Zionists in Palestine in the last decade or two—but not in the direction of national autonomy. They have caused denuded hills to bring forth fruit, and created thronged habitations where there were once barren wastes. They have established a university hard by Mount Zion which is already a world-famous seat of learning; and they have founded farm-colonies throughout the land which show

promise of nurturing a new way of life for mankind. Spiritually they have accomplished a miracle, and even economically they have wrought well. But politically they have achieved almost nothing at all. Palestine is still ruled entirely by the British and inhabited almost entirely by Arabs. The Jews there number little more than 200,000 in all—approximately as many as are to be found in the city of Vienna alone. Palestine may well have become a homeland of the Jews; but it is not now, and never can be again, the only homeland.

For we Jews are so numerous that even if Palestine were crowded to capacity it could never contain even a quarter of our population. Besides, most Jews feel so rooted in the lands where they dwell that they would not, even if they could, become members of a separate state. Their Jewishness, no matter how intense, has in most cases no faintest bearing on their national allegiance. The Hindu Jews are devoted to the cause of India's freedom, and the Communist Jews are ready to die for the Proletariat. Sir Herbert Samuel is as loyal an Englishman as Léon Blum is a Frenchman, or as Guido Jung is an Italian, or as Justice Cardozo is an American. In the World War twelve thousand Jews laid down their lives for Germany, well over two thousand died for France, some twenty-three hundred for England, and approximately thirty-five hundred for the United States. And when the carnage was ended and the spoils were being divided, Allied statesmen like



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Paul Hymans of Belgium, Edwin S. Montagu of England, Louis Lucien Klotz of France, Baron Sonnino of Italy, and Bernard Baruch of the United States, fell to wrangling, each for his own country, with no thought of the fact that they happened to be Jews. Characteristically, when Poland and Lithuania fought before the Council of the League of Nations for the possession of the city of Wilno, the spokesman for Poland was a Jew named Simon Ashkenazy, and the advocate of Lithuania's cause was another Jew, Max Soloweitschik! And the presiding arbiter was a third Jew, Paul Hymans! . . . .

### 8

And just as we are not integrated politically, and cannot be classified as a nation, just so we are not unified in folk-culture, and cannot be described as even a nationality. There are many Jews who will violently dissent on this point, but that is because they have not yet discarded their ghetto blinders. They cannot see beyond those regions where the local Jewish population happens to form a distinct cultural entity. It is true that in Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Levant, and Asia, the Jews are frequently recognizable not alone by the religion they profess, but also by their speech, and even their costume. And so marked is the social cleavage between them and the neighboring non-Jews that in some instances they have succeeded in winning

juridical recognition as separate "national minorities." Thus in Poland and Lithuania they have their own political parties, and their own school-systems supported (at least on paper) by the state. In parts of Russia they even have their own municipalities and law-courts. And such an arrangement, though a source of much strife, is altogether necessary in those regions, for in each of them the Jews do form a distinct nationality.

But what is true of some parts of Jewry is not true of the whole. Taken the world over we Jews are hardly more united culturally than are the vegetarians or the mathematicians. To begin with, we have not even a common mother-tongue. Only a tiny minority among us can converse in Hebrew; the rest are as lost in that tongue as are the Catholics in Latin. The millions native to Eastern Europe speak Yiddish, which is basically fifteenth-century German; the Levantines speak Ladino, which is a Hebraized form of archaic Spanish; and most of the Oriental Jews speak a jargonized Arabic. As for the rest of us: we call our mother-tongue whatever language happens to be spoken in the land which gave us birth.

And what has been said of language holds true also for the other cultural factors which are regarded as the criteria of nationality. For example, we have no one characteristic costume, for although in the more backward lands the pious Jews can often be recognized by their mode of dress, that mode is not the same in any

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two regions. In Poland they affect peaked caps and long coats, but in Morocco they are distinguished only by the shape of their turbans and the color of their cloaks. On the hottest day in Jerusalem you will find Galician Jews still wearing fur hats and velvet gaberdines. As far from home as Shanghai the immigrant Bagdadi Jews still sometimes cling to their Turkish pantaloons and red fezzes. For each of these costumes is regarded (by those who wear it) as the only proper garb for a loyal Jew.

Similarly most of our superstitions, when they are not of ancient origin, vary according to the land in which we dwell. In Poland the Jewish crones will mumble Slavic spells over sick children; in North Africa they will go to a spring, kill a black cock there, and bring back its blood to smear on the child's forehead; and in America they will perhaps call in a chiropractor.

The same is true of our cookery. Stuffed-fish is a Jewish dish only among those of us who derive from Central or Eastern Europe; it is totally unknown to the Oriental Jews. By the same token, a peculiarly curried fish which is regarded as distinctly Jewish in Cochin, would be deemed an unspeakably heathenish stew by Jews in Warsaw or New York.

And in a like manner our folk-songs and dances are different in each land. It is no mere coincidence that what is commonly regarded in Eastern Europe and on

the East Side of New York as the traditional Jewish wedding-song, *Chasan kala mazel-tov*, is nothing but Tchaikovsky's *Marche Slave* in a heightened tempo. Most Yiddish melodies—and indirectly many of the popular songs emanating from Broadway—though composed by Jews, are really Slavic in character. Similarly the *kazatzki* danced by "Hebrew comedians" on the vaudeville stage is actually not Jewish but Tartar. Such songs and dances mean nothing to Jews in the Levant and Asia, for these have their own kinds based on Arabic or Turkish prototypes.

And thus one more method of classifying the Jew is seen to be invalid. We are no more a nationality than we are a nation, and no more nation than a race. Nor, as I have shown, are we a distinct religious group any longer. In all such ways we stubbornly defy classification, and will continue to do so, no matter what friends or foes may seek to do with us. The past cannot be undone. We Jews have lived so long and wandered so far, we have mingled with so many people and learnt from them so much, that culturally, politically, biologically, and theologically we no longer conform to any single pattern. In that respect we are, as a people, unique. If we are distinct from the rest of mankind, it is not in any ordinary way. And unless this is realized, there is no solving our riddle.

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## C H A P T E R     S I X

### WHAT JEWS REALLY ARE

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THIS much is clear: we Jews have survived because once we wanted to live, and because ever since then we have not been allowed to die. Why we wanted to live is likewise clear: we believed ourselves to be God's Chosen People, and sought to endure until we could inherit His Kingdom. So sure were we then of our glorious destiny that we seemed, as Luther once spluttered in exasperation: *'Stocksteineisenteufelshart*, "Stick-stone-iron-devil-hard." Such stubbornness naturally aroused the ire of the Gentiles, and so long as we persisted in it, that ire could not wane. But what remains to be explained is why that ire continues even after the stubbornness is gone. Why was it that for centuries after the Spanish and Portuguese Jews submitted to baptism, their descendants continued to be regarded as an alien brood? Why is it that the Chuetas in Majorca, though they have been devout Catholics for generations, remain to this day a pariah folk? Why have the Daggatuns not been able to lose themselves among the Saharan Moslems, or the Dönmeh among the Turks? Or why is it that the millions of us here in the Occident who try so

hard to look and act and think like the Gentiles are so persistently repulsed and reminded that we are still Jews?

The most obvious answer is that once a popular prejudice has been given a hearty start, it can travel on sheer momentum. Thereafter only a conscious effort can halt it, and the mass-mind is unequal to that. Thus at the present time, though most of us have long ceased to imagine that we are the Chosen of God, most Gentiles still believe we are steeped in that conceit. For them to believe otherwise would require exertion. It would require first the entertainment of doubt, then a search for the truth, and finally an acceptance of that truth no matter how it ran counter to the initial belief. And all that is beyond them. That is why most Gentiles today have no idea as to what Jews really are; they know only what we were once supposed to be. They have inherited an image stencilled by centuries of credulity, and only rarely do they so much as suspect that it may be unreal.

This is true not alone in the dark fastnesses of North Africa or Asia, but even here in the United States. One of the guides at the Jewish Exhibit in the Hall of Religions at Chicago's "Century of Progress" published an illuminating report of his experiences during the exposition.\* He tells of visitors who stared open-mouthed

\* "Alas, Poor Goy," by Albert T. Bilgray, *Hebrew Union College Monthly*, Oct., 1933.

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at the replica of a modern synagogue which was on display there, and who asked in a whisper to see the knives used for the sacrifices! . . . "Where is the receptacle for the blood?" they inquired. "Do you really sacrifice children before the Passover?" . . . He himself came in for much wide-eyed scrutiny, for it seems that many of the visitors had never before seen a "real live Jew." One man, a village pastor from northern Wisconsin, having elicited the information that the guide was a "full-blooded Jew," confessed: "I have been preaching the Gospel for thirty years and I have often mentioned the Pharisees; but until now I never knew what a Pharisee looked like. When my congregation asked me whether there were any Pharisees left, I told them I had heard there were some in New York!" . . .

There you have a fair sample of the common ignorance touching the Jew. Nor is the ignorance always as naïvely primitive as that. In most instances it has been corrupted by modern demagogery, and made unspeakably vicious. To the ordinary Gentile in America today the "ideal" Jew is not simply the Pharisee of the New Testament, but in addition the "bomb-throwing Bolshevik" pictured in the paranoiac press, and the "international banker" so hated by the political mountebank. In addition to being Judas and Caiaphas he is Trotzky and Rothschild. Besides slaying Gentile children to procure blood for the Passover cup, he also gathers with his brethren in secret conclaves to plot the world's over-

throw. Utter the word "Jew" to any rustic Gentile, and it will almost invariably evoke some such image as that.

And even in the educated Gentile it may often evoke at least a ghost of that image—for almost all educated Gentiles were reared among ignorant ones. To an enlightened person the word "Jew" will certainly not connote a Christ-killer, bomb-thrower, or white-slaver. Nevertheless it will almost as certainly carry with it associations which are in some vague way unsavory. He cannot help it, for those associations are in most instances a "conditioned reflex" in him. Let him learn that the man who is seeking to become his business-partner happens to be a Jew, and no matter how enlightened this Gentile may be, he will almost invariably be beset by hesitations. It is not because he has any conscious bias. Rather it is because he has memories left over from childhood which rise up like a wraith and film his mind's eye. Were he not enlightened those memories would be less tenuous and would perhaps blind him completely. As it is they may do no more than blur his vision. But that is evil enough, for what in ordinary times is only a mist may in time of stress become an impenetrable fog. And the worst of the evil is that it is renewed with each generation. Prejudice against the Jew is a sort of bad habit which is sustained by the world's mental sluggishness. For centuries we Jews were loathed because we kept ourselves alien; and now it is easier for the world to go on loathing us



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than to stop and find out whether we still want to keep ourselves alien. The backwardness of the mass-mind—it is this more than anything else that keeps the prejudice alive.

### 2

But that cannot be the whole of the story. It is indisputably true that the Gentile's aversion is essentially to a mythical Jew, and is largely a relic from the past. But it is just as indisputable that there is something about the real Jew living today that provides what may be construed as a justification for that aversion. There is no denying that, despite all our assimilation, we do appear somehow a distinct entity in the world. It is not simply a matter of our past repute. Something in our present life contributes to make us appear alien. What that thing is, however, has completely eluded even most students of the problem. They have said the distinctiveness inheres in our religion, or our race, or our nationality. But actually it inheres rather in the pattern of our economy. Almost all Jews are city-folk, and almost all Gentiles (mentally if not also physically) are still country-folk. And therein, I suspect, lies the crucial reason why the prejudice against us endures.

Let us pause for a moment and consider how this distinctiveness arose. It has been maintained by some writers that our proclivity for urban life is a racial trait; but this is clearly disproved by our history. In

our own land in Bible times we were entirely an agricultural people. Not until after our Dispersion did we become primarily a city-folk, and then only because of necessity. In the first place our ritual made compact settlements imperative. To fulfil the commandments one had to have access to a synagogue and a house of learning, and to a ritual bath and a ritual slaughter-house. Therefore a Jew could not live in isolation among Gentiles. But a Jewish settlement could not easily exist in the open countryside, for it was too exposed to attack there. Consequently we had to flock to the cities and learn to subsist as traders and craftsmen. It was the only way we could maintain ourselves in a hostile world. That is why by the first century we were already a conspicuous element in all the trading centers around the Mediterranean. In Rome itself, according to Cicero, we were sufficiently numerous to influence the elections. In Alexandria, the second city in the Empire, we formed almost half of the entire population. Judging from the *Book of Acts*, Paul and the other Christian apostles found colonies of fellow-Jews to preach to in every city they visited.

What became of most of these colonies after the Barbarians razed the cities, is not known. They probably disintegrated, and Jewry survived only because its center was still in the East. The majority of the Jews during that anarchic era lived on in Mesopotamia, where their own numbers, and the relative tolerance of

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the Pagan populace, made it possible for them to subsist largely by husbandry. But in the seventh century they began to stream back into Europe, and once more it was to the cities that they were attracted. These were no longer the metropolitan centers of trade which they had been in the days of the Roman Empire. In most instances they were no more than local market places established in the shadow of feudal citadels. But because the Jews came as traders they were necessarily drawn to these markets: and because they were Jews they had to remain in them. They could not move out into the open country and take to agriculture like the Christians. There were laws forbidding that, and even if these could have been evaded, there remained the danger of mob attack. The masses had a horror of all infidels, and the Jews could look for safety only if they stayed close to the local lord. They were, according to feudal law, the lord's personal property; and, because he had an essential use for them, it was to his profit to protect them.

The feudal rulers needed the Jews because the latter were then almost the sole agents of foreign trade. Several circumstances contributed to give them this monopoly. For one thing, what with the banditry rampant in that age, and the lack of roads, the multitude of frontiers, and other such difficulties, the business of carrying merchandise from land to land was too hazardous for all except the Jews—who had no other means of

subsistence. For another thing, they had the advantage of being neither Christians nor Moslems, and therefore they could travel between the East and the West as neutrals in the conflict that then divided the world. Finally, they knew many languages and had kinsmen everywhere, so that no matter how far they wandered, they were always able to find their way about. When Charlemagne sent an embassy to Harun al-Rashid about the year 800, it was only natural that he should send his "Isaac the Jew" to guide the party. At that time there were Jewish caravans to be found on all the great highways from France to China, for there was what amounted to an organized guild of Jews whose sole occupation was that of carrying wares between Europe and Asia. They were known as the Radanites (from the Persian *rah dan*, "knowers of the way") and they seem to have had their headquarters in the great city of Rhaga, near Teheran. Their usual route was by way of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean; but they also went overland through the Slav countries and across Turkestan and Mongolia. They brought condiments and perfumes from the Orient to flavor the food and make fragrant the bodies of the lords and ladies in the castles of Europe; and they carried back slaves and furs and swords to the potentates in the East.

Nor was it only such marketable produce that those Jews transported. Infinitely more important was the learning which they carried to and fro, for it was this

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that led to the rebirth of culture in the West. According to the chronicles it was the Jews who first brought the Hindu system of numerals to the Arabs, and later transmitted it (as "Arabic numerals") to the Christians. Similarly they helped bring Hindu geometry and trigonometry to the Arabs, and Arabic medicine, astronomy, and philosophy to the Europeans. Those wandering Jews were more than the middle-men of commerce; they were also the matchmakers between civilizations.

But after the tenth century the Radanites and their kind disappeared. That was because the rise of the Tartars in Inner Asia had cut off the overland route, and the rise of Venice on the Mediterranean made it difficult for Jews to follow the sea routes. In 964 the doges forbade all Venetian vessels to carry Jewish passengers, and in 992 they prohibited them from carrying even the freight belonging to Jews. And thus the sons of Israel, having no fleets of their own, were forced out of a calling which they almost alone had started. So long as trading between East and West had been full of danger and in the highest degree speculative, the Jews had been allowed and even encouraged to engage in it. But once they had established it as a regular business, and had proved its profitableness, they were forced to cede it to the Gentiles.

So then they took to moneylending. They were able to take to it for much the same reason that they had once been able to engage in the Far Eastern trade: be-

cause the occupation was too hazardous, and in this instance also too ignoble, for the Gentiles. The Church regarded the taking of interest as sinful, and therefore what few Christians had any money preferred hoarding it to lending it out. Yet now that the darkness had begun to lift in Western Europe, and the economic life had become more vigorous, there was a clamor everywhere for capital. In earlier days there had been so little trading that most of it could be done in kind. But now there was an imperative need for currency, and that gave the Jews their chance. They had accumulated considerable gold by the time they were driven from the trade-routes, for that had always been the chief medium of exchange in international commerce. So now they took their wealth and began to lend it out at usurious interest. Such a procedure was as roundly anathematized in the Talmud as in Canon Law. The tractate *Baba Metziab* (70b) declares categorically that it is a sin to lend money at interest, whether to a Jew or to a non-Jew. But it was written in Mesopotamia before the fifth century, and this was Europe more than seven hundred years later. As the great Rabbi Jacob ben Meir of Champagne argued: "What can we do? We have to pay burdensome taxes to kings and princes . . . and we have no other trade left. Consequently, the lending of money must be made just as legitimate a pursuit as any other."

It was a fortunate thing for Europe that the authori-

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ties of the synagogue dared take such a stand, for it loosed a stream of capital which lubricated the machinery of commerce and enabled it to gather speed. The Church itself realized this and insisted that though the Jewish usurers were a scurvy lot, nevertheless all debts to them were legal and must be repaid. That, incidentally, was why the Jews could afford to charge less exorbitant rates of interest than the non-Jews who stooped to engage in banking. There were many such non-Jews—William Cade in twelfth-century England is a notorious example—and their status was much like that of the bootleggers in the United States during the era of Prohibition. They operated outside the law, and therefore, because they took greater risks, they had to demand greater compensation. Hoffmann's excellent work on the subject gives documentary evidence of the relative moderateness of the Jewish usurers.\* Thus in North Germany, where they were not tolerated, the usual rate of interest was in the neighborhood of 10%, whereas in South Germany, where there was Jewish competition, the rate varied from 4½% to 8½%. The citizens of Lindau in Bavaria pleaded for the Jews to be admitted to the town for one reason alone: because the Christian usurers there were charging annual interest as high as two hundred and sixteen percent! In his deathbed testament the famous English ecclesiastic, Bishop Grosseteste, warned his disciples to shun the

\* *Geldhandel der deutschen Juden*, Leipzig, 1910.

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Christian usurers because they were all without mercy, and to resort instead to the Jewish ones when in need of funds.\*

Under such conditions it was not impossible for the Jews to subsist, and in some instances even to prosper. But of course those conditions did not last. Once the Christians became fully aware of the indispensability and the profitableness of the traffic in gold, they saw no reason for leaving it any longer in the hands of the Jews. The popes finally came around to the point of view of the medieval rabbis, and relaxed the prohibition against taking interest. They relaxed it first in favor of the monastic orders, and later also granted money-lending privileges to certain individuals. Thus there arose a class of legitimate Christian usurers, most of them merchant-princes from Lombardy. (To this day the main thoroughfare in the financial quarter of London is known as Lombard Street.) And therewith the Jews lost their advantage of being the only persons who could legally engage in finance.

That loss almost destroyed them. It robbed them of their usefulness to the Christians, and left them utterly helpless. They could not engage in ordinary commerce, for all the essential lines of trade were monopolized by the guilds that had grown up among the Christian burghers. Nor could they take to the industrial crafts,

\* *Chronica Majora*, Rolls Series, v. 404, quoted in Ashley, *Introduction to English Economic History and Theory*, p. 201.



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for these too had fallen into the hands of the guilds. And of course agriculture was still out of the question, for the laws prohibiting Jews from owning land were still almost universally in force. There was thus no place left for them in the established economic life of Europe, and they were therefore summarily expelled from one country after another. They were ousted from England in 1290, from France in 1306, from Austria in 1421, from Bavaria in 1452, from Spain in 1492, and from Portugal in 1496.

In some instances these mass expulsions were only temporary, for once the Jews were gone the rulers found themselves deprived of a most convenient source of revenue. The feudal princes had always been able to exploit the Jews much as a certain type of hermit-crab will exploit helpless sea-plants. Such a crab usually carries around a tiny anemone in his front claws and lets it consume any fragments of marine life which come within reach of its swaying tentacles. Thus the crab spares himself the trouble of gathering his food piece-meal, for no sooner has his prisoner become gorged than he gobbles it up at one swallow. Nor is that the only use he makes of the plant. In addition, whenever he finds himself about to be attacked by a larger crab, he hastily drops the anemone to distract his assailant, and in the ensuing scramble makes good his escape. . . . That was almost precisely how a medieval lord had all along made use of the Jews. He had emptied

their coffers at one scoop and then had let them go out and refill them by gathering the taxes from the serfs. And whenever in time of famine or drought the maddened serfs had threatened to rebel, the lord had simply flung them the Jews and gone back to his carousing. And he could not exploit his Christian financiers in such a way. Indeed, because they enjoyed the protection of Rome, it was often they who exploited him. Therefore wherever a ruler could momentarily extricate himself from the clutches of those Christian financiers, he hastily recalled their competitors, the Jews.

But unhappily these recalls were no more lasting than the expulsions. For example, in France the Jews were driven out in 1306, allowed back in 1315, expelled again in 1322, permitted to return again in 1359, and finally sent packing "forever" in 1394. It was even worse in Germany, where there was little central authority, and the Jews were largely at the mercy of the aldermen in each town. These aldermen were themselves moneylenders and traders, and because the Jews were their rivals they did all in their power to keep them out. Only by dint of bribing the provincial lord or prelate, or by agreeing to pay the most exorbitant taxes to the municipality, could the Jews manage to get themselves re-admitted to a town. And even then it was usually only to be expelled again a few years later. Thus in a city like Hildesheim we find them admitted in 1347, expelled in 1349, recalled in 1351, reduced to twelve

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families (not counting the cantor and synagogue beadle) in 1439, freely accepted again in 1450, banished again in 1457, permitted to return in 1520, once more banished in 1552, allowed back in 1585, again expelled in 1595, recalled in 1601, banished and again recalled in 1609, driven out (with the exception of two families) in 1660, and finally readmitted in 1662!

To prosper under such circumstances was out of the question; merely to keep alive required little short of superhuman vitality. The Jews had to be forever darting from one town to another, from one land to the next. And even when they were allowed to alight for a brief moment, they were hampered by a thousand restrictions. High finance passed almost completely out of their hands. At most they could engage in petty pawnbroking, or failing that, in peddling or cattle-dealing. If they were permitted to open shops, it was only in the rear alleys. If they could trade in the market-places, it was usually only after nine or ten in the morning, when the best bargains were already gone. They dared not travel without a costly letter of protection. At every town gate they had to pay exorbitant poll taxes. And wherever they went they had to wear the Yellow Badge to make known their shame. . . .

Little wonder that their numbers fell away until they almost disappeared in Western and Central Europe. By the year 1500 there were only six or seven sizable Jewish communities left in all Europe, and of these only

one, that of Prague, contained more than three thousand souls. No doubt the Black Death had much to do with this decline, and even more the wholesale massacres which accompanied the scourge. But most of all it must have been the persistent exclusion from the towns, for this left the Jews with no means of earning a livelihood. Trading was the only occupation they knew or were allowed to know, and trading could be done only in towns.

That is why so many Jews fled to Poland during this period. There were no great cities in that land but there was room to create them. Economic life was still almost as primitive then in Eastern Europe as it had been in France or Germany five hundred years earlier; and therefore the Jews had a chance in that region. And the local rulers, feudal princes eager to increase their revenues, were glad to have them come and stimulate commerce. So the fugitives poured into the Slavic wilderness, bringing with them their German speech and their city-bred cunning. They set up trading posts, developed them into market-places, organized seasonal fairs, and gradually built up great trading centers.

And when, after many generations, Poland's commerce was established, they who had done most to create it were again told to move on. So the Jews began to drift back into Germany, for by now (after 1648) authority had become more centralized there, and the individual towns were no longer so free to badger

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them. Still later, unable to endure the continued oppression, they made their way across to the New World, there to do over again what they had done in Europe. They settled in the growing villages of America and helped to make them towns, or in the towns and helped to make them metropolitan cities. Estranged from the soil, they continued to engage only in trade and industry. Ill-at-ease in isolation, they continued to be drawn always to the urban places. The choice was dictated by their tradition, by their history. For fifteen hundred years their forebears had perforce been city-folk. So city-folk they had to remain.

### 3

That is why we Jews are almost universally urban creatures to this day. Even when we live in villages, we continue to be urban in our interests, for almost invariably we are the village shopkeepers. In recent decades it is true that some of us, free at last to do so, have attempted to end our bondage to the asphalt and go down again to the soil. But save in Palestine and (possibly) in Russia these attempts have been largely half-hearted. We are still irresistibly attracted to the crowded places, and the more crowded they are, the more we are attracted to them. Fully 35% of the Jews in Germany live in Berlin, 50% of those in Hungary live in Budapest, and 80% of those in Austria live in Vienna. Even here in America, where there has never

been any legal restriction on our choice of residence, we have always gravitated toward the urban centers. Fully 45% of all the Jews in the United States are penned in the metropolitan area of New York City, and 20% of the rest live in Chicago and Philadelphia. We are approximately  $31\frac{1}{2}$ % of the total population of the country; but we form more than 11% of the population of the sixty-eight largest cities. . . .

And I am convinced that more than anything else it is this gross unevenness in our distribution that makes us still appear a distinct people. It is altogether abnormal for a group to be so intensely urban. Even in a highly industrialized country such as the United States fully 44% of the population is still rural. But of the Jews living here more than 99% are urban. And this disparity, which is even greater in other lands, makes us obtrusive in the world. The bulk of the human race still regards the countryside as its proper habitat, and it looks with mingled contempt and distrust on the man who feels at home in the town. To enter into the reasons for this would lead us far afield. It is enough to note here that such an attitude is almost universal. It is held not alone by the rustics but to a large extent even by the town-dwellers themselves. That is because the vast majority of town-dwellers are immigrants, or the children of immigrants, from the countryside. Their feet may have grown used to the hard, smooth pavements, but their minds still plod along as

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though dragging through loam. They may long ago have combed the straw out of their hair, but their souls still smell of the fields—and often of the stables. Essentially they are transplanted peasants who have not yet become reconciled to what Hitler calls the “asphalt wilderness.” And therefore they too, though perhaps only subconsciously, look with aversion on the man who truly “belongs” in town. They and their rustic kinsmen feel much as do the American Indians: that the man who is at home in the town has lost contact with the earth-spirits, and therefore has half-lost his soul.

And the Jew feels at home nowhere else. He seems to have become adapted to the town even biologically. Despite that there has been continual infiltration of Gentile blood into Jewry, that blood seems to have been strained through the filter of urban exigencies. Not impossibly a process of natural selection has gone on within the Jewish group, weeding out of it those elements ill-adapted to town-existence. The test, it is well to realize, was an exceedingly rigorous one. Until less than a century ago the towns were literally plague-spots, and only those who chanced to be immune to the commoner infections were able to live long enough to reproduce their kind. Even today, when sanitation is enormously improved, and physical education is extensively encouraged, city-life still seems to be devitalizing to the race. That is why the population of the cities has had to be continually replenished by immigra-

tion from the provinces. Each generation of newcomers suffers the fate of the one before. It buckles under the psychic strain of adjustment, resorts to alcohol, loses physical vitality, succumbs to disease, and dies leaving a weakened progeny. Only because there is a surrounding sea to cast up fresh waves of immigrants do the cities remain populated.

But it is apparently quite otherwise with the Jews. We do not need to draw on the provinces to keep our ranks replenished. On the contrary, thanks perhaps in part to the process of selection which has incessantly combed our stock, we have been capable of actually multiplying in the cities. Possibly that is why, despite that though we are so like the particular Gentiles in whose midst we live, we are yet never precisely identical with them. If they are dark, we too are dark; yet not quite so dark. If they are fair, we too are fair; but with a small difference. Even in so subtle a matter as the agglutinative qualities of our blood we show a slight statistical unlikeness. And when it comes to pathology we are said to show—at least in Europe and America—quite marked peculiarities. For example, we seem to have developed a superior resistance to tuberculosis, and a partial immunity to smallpox and certain other contagious diseases. Not impossibly we are a peculiar variety of the prevailing racial blend in each locality, a variety that has been sifted through the sieve of urban exactions. Wherever we have lived we have intermar-



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ried and intermated; but only those of the progeny who could endure the town could survive as Jews.

But there are other factors besides biological selection which may account for our capacity to maintain ourselves in cities. For one thing, we have been sustained by a social solidarity which the Gentiles have not known save in the villages. We have roamed the jungle of urban life not as lone wolves, but in packs. Despite the disintegrating influences of city existence, we have of necessity preserved a sense of loyalty to one another. "All Israel are brethren," we have always maintained. Therefore we have made the rich among us support the poor, and forced the strong to aid the weak. And when one of us was attacked we have all rushed to his defense. It is one of the curious errors of folk-speech that the Gentiles have usually called us "dogs," and we have called them "pigs." But if a dog is in distress, as a rule all the other dogs will leap on him, whereas when a pig gets into trouble all the other pigs will squeal their sympathy. Therefore in one sense it is we Jews who are the pigs, and the Gentiles who are the dogs. And that may be one of the reasons why we have been able to survive in the city, whereas the Gentiles have always been destroyed by it.

And there is another and even more effective reason. In addition to this social solidarity we have had our religious laws to sustain us. Until three generations ago almost all Jews were still strict observers of the

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Torah, and even today a goodly portion of us pay it unqualified heed. And that Torah, one must remember, not alone regulates diet, regiments cleanliness, and prohibits drunkenness and venery, but also commands early marriage and unrestricted fertility. Keeping it must therefore necessarily have had a vitalizing effect on us. Indeed one might be able to account for our virility as a city-folk without so much as mentioning the possibility of natural selection. The secret may well lie not at all in our chromosomes but entirely in our Scriptures. I say that because, with the marked waning of religious zeal in the last few decades, our virility seems to have followed suit. In places where assimilation has been most intense, devitalizing factors like drunkenness are no longer unheard of among Jews. A recent study of the admissions to the psychiatric ward at Bellevue Hospital in New York City revealed that the percentage of Jewish patients treated for chronic alcoholism rose from 0.5% in 1914 to 6.2% in 1926.\* And, as is only to be expected, together with this growth of alcoholism there has come an increase in the incidence of organic mental disturbances due to venereal disease.

Even more alarming, because far more marked, is the recent decline of our birth-rate in the larger cities. Wherever we still cling to our old traditions we are able to multiply our numbers; but elsewhere we seem

\* Goldberg and Malzberg, "Mental Diseases Among Jews," in *The Psychiatric Review*, N. Y., April, 1928.

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unable even to maintain them. Theilhaber in his *Untergang der deutschen Juden*, published in 1911, showed that the Jewish population in Germany, almost all of it settled in cities, was literally committing race-suicide. In Berlin alone the birthrate per hundred thousand Jews of child-bearing age fell from 112 in the year 1880, to 54 in 1910. Almost as startling a decrease in fertility has been noted in other centers of assimilation, and it is becoming aggravated with each succeeding year. Of course, a like decline has always been noted among the Gentiles in the cities; but that has no bearing on the problem we are discussing. If our capacity to resist the sterilizing influences of the town is primarily a result of natural selection—in other words, if it is biological—then it should persist no matter how we change theologically. But since that capacity fails to persist, obviously it must be dependent on ritual piety rather than inherited virility.

That, however, is a tangential question. The fact remains that, no matter what its origin, a capacity to survive in cities has until now been distinctly characteristic of the Jews. And as a result we are today in a sense "pure" urban creatures. No matter how mixed may be our actual heredity, our environment has remained constant. Even the individual who is half a Gentile in his mother's womb, is made entirely a Jew as he grows up in the ghetto. And that, I suggest, is why we appear so distinctive. In a world which has

always been fundamentally rural, we for almost two thousand years have been quintessentially urban.

### 4

Now urban life does things to people. To begin with, it estranges them from the physical. That is one reason why the townsman is so despised by the rustics: he appears to them debilitated and effete. And if the ordinary townsman presents that appearance, the Jew presents it almost in caricature. For the Jew is not merely estranged from the physical; he is positively alienated from it. The wilderness and the untamed beasts, the mountains, the fields, the streams—he feels lost among them. It is only in the town that he feels at home. The dashing heroism which most Gentiles admire, the heroism of those who go out into the wild places and wrestle with soil and beast and fellow man, only vaguely stirs the ordinary ghetto-dweller. To be sure, the animal within him is not so dead that tales of brute adventure will not strike some response within his breast. And for a worthwhile cause he himself will not hesitate to play the hero in such tales. For example, in Palestine in the last few years more than forty thousand Jews and Jewesses have dared to go out amid a half-barbaric peasantry and wrest a home for themselves there. They have pitched their tents on lonely hillsides, drained swamps, ploughed wastes, fought off marauders, and made the soil bear. But it

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required a consuming passion to make them capable of such temerity. In Biro-Bidjan, in far Siberia, where a similar settlement is being attempted under the inspiration of Communism, the results are (as yet) far less impressive. And in the Argentine, where such a settlement was attempted a generation ago with no more than the philanthropy of Baron de Hirsch to give it impetus, it failed almost completely. Save when we are sufficiently drunk with some heady ideal, we Jews are usually afraid to stay in unsheltered places.

It is not that we are cowards. (Is there a more heroic chapter in all the annals of history than that which tells of Israel's career?) Rather it is that we are physically squeamish and have a rooted horror of all violence. We can be truculent in our thought and utter the most murderous oaths; but we recoil when it comes to dealing blows. As the ancient rabbis were wont to remark, "Jacob may have the voice, but it is Esau that has the hands." That is why murder is so rare among us. That too is why we are so revolted by war. It is no accident that Jews like Henri Barbusse and Siegfried Sassoon were among the first writers to dare expose the filth and vileness of trench-life in the World War. It is no accident that Jews throughout the world today should be among the leaders in pacifist agitation. As a people we have an almost unconquerable loathing of bloodshed. We sicken at the mere sight of it. Most assimilated Jews sharply resent it when they are taunted with

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this. But they resent it in part because they realize it is true, and even more because they know that those who taunt them with it are the ones who made it true. The Gentiles who forced us to confine our life and thought to the town are the ones who are alone to blame if the berserk spirit has been drained out of us.

For let us be clear on one point: the present absence of that spirit in us can by no means be attributed to any primal "race deficiency." There was a time—and curiously it was before so much Gentile blood had entered our veins—when we were as fond of gore as any other folk. We could go out then against the Amalekites and cut down the men, the women, and the little ones, with a savagery unexcelled even by the ancient Goths. We positively loved to make our arrows "drunk with blood," and wield our swords till our arms wearied of cutting down a routed host. If, therefore, there were such a thing as a "racial predilection" in us, it would make us lust for nothing but carnage. But instead we recoil from the very thought of it. I am of course generalizing when I say that. There are those among us, as among the Gentiles, who love to inflict pain and shed blood. We too have our professional soldiers, and pugilists, and gangsters. But they are so rare that they only bring out the tameness of the rest of the Jews in greater relief. And because we are so tame we stand out as aliens in a world that is still half-wild. "Jew! Do you know why you are the lowest of all men?" cries

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one of the characters in Franz Werfel's *Goat Song*. "It is because you cannot understand blood-lust. . . ." Some may question that judgment. They may insist that this lack in us makes us the highest rather than the lowest of men. But, be we higher or lower, none can question that we are different.

### 5

And this is only one of the ways in which urban conditioning has affected us. If we seem an alien element because of our horror of violence, we seem even more alien because of our esteem for cleverness. This esteem, like that horror, is marked in all other townsfolk—but not nearly so extravagantly as among us Jews. And the reason, obviously, is that no other townsfolk has had to rely so entirely on cleverness to make its way in the world. For, being everywhere a minority, we have always had to make our way in the ruts; we have never been able to walk the paved highways. If that is less true today than formerly it is only because we have managed to widen certain of those ruts and make them paved highways of our own. Out of the peddler's pack we have developed the department store. Out of the medieval cellar-shops where we used to patch cast-off raiment we have created our great garment factories. Our combing of the refuse-heaps has flowered into antique-dealing and scrap-metal brokerage. Our long confinement to pawnbroking has ended in our domination

of the diamond business. Our millennial apprenticeship as horse-traders has made us now the shrewdest dealers in second-hand automobiles. In each instance we took up an enterprise which was beneath or beyond the Gentiles, and by dint of our keen wits and monstrous energy we managed to make of it a reputable and significant economic activity.

The contemporary theatrical business is another instance of this. We Jews got into it in the first place because it was deemed far too shady to interest respectable Christians—save perhaps as patrons. The stage as recently as two generations ago was associated almost entirely with the underworld. Most of the producers were beer-hall proprietors, and most of the actresses were prostitutes. So certain Jews seized the opportunity to worm their way in. They took over one small theater after another, shouted themselves hoarse coaching new actors, risked their fortunes on new plays, haggled, borrowed, schemed, and scrouged, and finally succeeded in transforming a muddle of furtive gutter enterprises into a highly organized and vastly ramified cultural industry. It took cunning to do that. No doubt it took other qualities as well, for when one compares the commercial playhouses today with the brothel side-shows which were their prototypes before Jews ventured into the field, one realizes that the advance has been in more than mere profitableness. But primarily (even in men like Belasco, Frohman, and Reinhardt)



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it was sheer business acumen that made success possible.

And much the same chain of circumstances accounts for the prominence of Jews in the film industry. When the "kinetoscope" and "bioscope" and other flickering lanterns made their first appearance some thirty years ago, most people thought them a passing novelty. Jews like Fox, Zukor, Schenck, Goldwyn, Lasky, and Selznick—ambitious young men whose opportunities were cut off in other directions—it was they who were the first to see the commercial possibilities of that novelty. So they were able to get in "on the ground floor," and soar with the industry. Much fun has been poked at those upstart magnates because of their intellectual naïveté and their cultural primitiveness. (And that fun, curiously enough, has been poked most trenchantly by Jewish wags and playwrights.) But the fact remains that those men did have sufficient perspicacity to seize an opportunity and make the most of it. Whether they will be able to continue making the most of it is dubious, for now that they have done the pioneering, and have firmly established the film industry, the great bankers of the nation seem to be reaching covetous hands toward it. Perhaps history will repeat itself, and, as in the case of the Far Eastern trade in the tenth century, and money-lending in the fourteenth, one more field cleared and ploughed by Jews will be harvested in the end by Gentiles.

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For those bankers, it is interesting to note, are almost all of them Gentiles. There are of course a number of Jewish bankers still left in America, and even more in Europe. But for some reason one rarely finds them taking over industries which are already well-established. Why that is, I do not know for certain. I suspect, however, it is because when it comes to predatory conquest they are elbowed out by their more powerful non-Jewish rivals. In no other way can one reasonably explain why the Jewish banking-houses usually confine themselves to financing industries which are still in the making. For example, they were extraordinarily prominent in the capitalization of the first railroad systems. Those projects appeared highly speculative in the beginning, and the Gentile houses had no lack of safer places to invest their funds. So the Rothschilds were able to advance the money for the building of the Northern Railway of France and the Nordbahn of Austria. The Bischoffsheims risked their fortunes on the Belgian railways, the Perieres (with the aid of the Brodskys and the Poliakoffs) on the Southern Railway of Russia, Baron de Hirsch on the Balkan railways, and the Bleichroders on the railways of Prussia. Even in the United States, where the non-Jewish bankers were far less conservative, it was possible for a house like Kuhn, Loeb and Co. to get in on the financing of the Harriman lines. As it turned out, most of these ventures were successful, and the Jews who staked so heavily on them won hand-

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some returns. But not for long. Once the railroads were firmly established, the Jewish bankers all withdrew. In some instances that may well have been because the profits, though more secure, had ceased to be spectacular. But more often—at least, so one is led to suspect—the pioneers withdrew only because they could not stay. Apparently the railroads had become too choice a field of investment to leave in the hands of Jews.

I am not complaining. I do not need to, for, despite all the disadvantages under which they may have labored, most of those Jewish bankers have managed to do right well for themselves. I can be bitter when I think of those many Jews who are denied the professional recognition they deserve, or the academic careers for which they yearn. I can be aroused when I think of those young Jewesses who cannot get jobs as typists, and of those old Jews to whom life is made a torment because they are bearded and speak with accents. But I have no tears for the Jewish bankers. If I have referred to the handicaps under which they too seem to labor, it has only been in order to reveal the ubiquity of such handicaps in Jewry. No matter whether the Jew is a financier or an office clerk, a merchant-prince or a peddler, a corporation counsel or a milkman, a world-famed savant or an elementary school-teacher, invariably he finds himself (or at least *thinks* himself) hampered because of his birth.

And that is what has so sharpened our wits. Whether the handicaps are real or imaginary, they goad us into exerting our intellects. We learn almost in the cradle that Jews must think twice as fast as Gentiles to get half as far in the world. We see that we must be ever vigilant to seize any stray opportunity, and be unflaggingly energetic to exploit it to the full. Moreover, we learn that we dare not make mistakes, for if we do they are not forgiven us. Years ago Professor Einstein bitterly remarked in an address at the Sorbonne: "If my theory of relativity is proven true, then in Germany I shall be hailed as a German, and in France as a citizen of the world. But if it is proven false, then in France I shall be called a German, and in Germany a Jew!" He was not exaggerating. (On the contrary, as it turned out he was rejected by Germany even though his theory was completely validated!) And the dread revealed in his words is one felt by all Jews. We all of us sense that there is a sword forever over our heads, and we know that we must be inexhaustibly resourceful to escape it. Not for us, we realize, is the sweet Victorian advice: "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever." We see that we cannot possibly be good in the eyes of the non-Jews, and so we *have* to be clever.

And as a result an excessive cleverness is seemingly characteristic of us. Professors Davies and Hughes

writing in the *British Journal of Psychology* in 1927 declare that careful psychometric investigation revealed the Jewish school-children in England as conspicuously superior to the non-Jewish. A similar investigation made among the students of Columbia University by Professor H. E. Garrett in 1928 yielded a similar finding. Again, when Professor Lewis M. Terman, the foremost American authority on the measurement of intelligence, sought out the thousand most gifted pupils in the schools of California to furnish data for his renowned *Genetic Studies in Genius*, he found that there were twice as many Jewish children among them as their proportion in the general population warranted. Even in India, according to the school reports I gathered there, the children of the native Bene-Israel show a distinct mental superiority to those of the Hindus.

Not impossibly this superiority (if it is real) has become in part a matter of heredity. That same process of natural selection which is said to have made us partially immune to certain urban diseases may also have left us with a greater proclivity for intelligence. Those of us who had the necessary mental advantage were able to survive and bring forth progeny. The rest had either to apostatize or die. And indisputably there has been a measure of artificial selection too, for during many centuries we Jews have been almost consciously breeding for intelligence. You can see that in our ancient Talmudic legends and our modern Hebrew and Yiddish

romances. In them the beautiful maiden always loses her heart not to a knight in shining armor but to a student with his nose in a book. For among us the hero has always been the man of brains, not the man of brawn. It has been the learned rather than the brave who have deserved—and won—the fair. And after at least two thousand years of such prejudice in mating, it is not to be wondered at if our stock seems congenitally superior in mentality.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that all Jews are now born clever, or that those who are, have the quality in equal measure. We are racially far too mixed for that. We too have our morons and idiots and imbeciles; and if we have less than our quota of insane (hardly half our quota in New York City \*), it is probably because we have not yet become so largely addicted to alcoholism as are the Gentiles, and do not expose ourselves so freely to venereal disease. Nevertheless it is altogether possible that after all these generations of "survival of the smartest" we may have developed a *diathesis*, a congenital propensity, for smartness.

But even if that be granted, the major factor is probably still that of environment. I am inclined to believe (unhappily it is impossible to test the point) that a hundred Jewish children reared from birth in a completely Gentile atmosphere would, if never apprised of

\* Malzberg, "Prevalence of Mental Disease Among Jews," *Mental Hygiene*, N. Y., October, 1930.

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their origin, develop mentalities in no wise unlike those of Gentiles. For at the very most what they would inherit would be a potential superiority; and without the goad of inordinate handicaps there would be little to quicken that potentiality. What counts therefore is not so much birth as rearing. We Jews are suckled on strain and weaned on dread. From the cradle to the grave we sense that we are besieged and must defend ourselves. And we have but one weapon—our wits. Therefore we never let them rust. We learn to think quickly and talk glibly, to parry nimbly and thrust hard. We learn to be shrewd, artful, and tirelessly aggressive. It is the only way we can keep alive.

### 7

But excessive cunning is not all that is nurtured in us by our harried existence. When soil and sun are not too ungenerous that thorny stalk can bring forth leaves of learning and the bloom of culture. It does that often in Jewry—so often that the common Gentile, whose own mind is perhaps more like a weed, is prone to resent it. He cannot understand why we, so absurdly small a people numerically, should bulk so large in the intellectual leadership of the world. Just how large we truly bulk he cannot possibly know, for he is too remote from intellectual circles. Names like Willstätter, Haber, Meyerhoff, James Franck, Niels Bohr, and Max Born, mean nothing to him. But he does know of "606," and

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the Wassermann Test, and the Schick Test; and when he learns that these were all discovered by Jews, he shakes his head in bewilderment. And when he is further informed that the first wireless experiment was performed by a Jew named Heinrich Hertz in 1886, that the first practical demonstration of man's ability to fly was made by another Jew, Otto Lilienthal, in 1891, and that the first rigid airship was built by a third Jew, David Schwarz, in 1892, he becomes a little annoyed. And when it dawns on him that the foremost scientist in the whole world today, Albert Einstein, is a Jew, and that the foremost philosopher, Henri Bergson, is also a Jew, and that the foremost psychologist, Sigmund Freud, is likewise a Jew, our common Gentile becomes almost indignant.

Especially is this true if he happens to be a German, for the prominence of Jews in every cultural field in his Fatherland seems to him a reflection on the "Aryans" who form ninety-nine percent of the population. It incenses him that the Jewish one percent should have produced more than a fourth of the Nobel Prizemen in Germany. It positively infuriates him when, as happened during the anti-Jewish campaign in April, 1933, his leaders are forced to go to France to find a symphony conductor worthy to supplant the German Jew, Bruno Walter—and then choose Pierre Monteux, who is belatedly discovered to be likewise a Jew. There is, he feels, something wrong about it all. No matter



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to what he turns, be it music, drama, literature, painting, science, philosophy, economics, or journalism, invariably he finds Jews in the forefront. It makes him almost suspect a conspiracy.

But as he himself would realize were he capable of thinking the matter through, it is only in the nature of things that we Jews should be so prominent in those fields. In the first place we are a city-folk, and cultural leadership is universally vested in such. Abhorrent as it may be to romanticists, the fact remains that only in the thronged settlements does culture advance to the greatest heights. The countryside can foster the simple arts—minstrelsy, the dance, and primitive sculpture and painting. But to nurture the more complicated forms one must necessarily have cities. That is because, as Professor Ortega y Gasset points out in his *The Revolt of the Masses*: "The man in the field is a sort of vegetable. His existence, all that he feels, thinks, and wishes for, preserves the listless drowsiness in which the plant has its life. . . . Hence Socrates, the great townsman, the quintessence of the spirit of the *polis*, can say, 'I have nothing to do with the trees of the field; I have to do only with the man in the city.' "

Throughout history it has been in such great centers of population as Cnossus, Babylon, Athens, Alexandria, Rome and Paris, that culture has been most vigorously pursued. It is only natural therefore that we Jews, having so long lived in such centers, should be among the

leaders in that pursuit. The error lies in thinking of us as a people like any other. We are not. The bulk of the Gentiles are still lost in the countryside, where they hear at most rumors of the cultural activities in the great cities. But we Jews grow up in the very midst of those activities, and even were it against our will we should have to be caught up in them.

And of course it is not against our will. On the contrary, because of our peculiar social position there is nothing that attracts us more than those activities. For through them we hope to escape from our prison-house. We know that among men of learning and art we are judged not so much by our birth as by our ability. There are exceptions, of course, especially if those men are academicians. But even among academicians we feel freer than in the circles of the philistines. And of course among the more advanced intellectuals and artists, among the real "Bohemians," we are completely at ease. That, I suspect, is the fundamental reason why so many of us are scholars and writers and musicians. It is not enough to say that we have an "instinctive" bent for the cultural pursuits. One must explain how and why such a bent could ever have become "instinctive." And the most plausible explanation, it seems to me, is that we know that in such pursuits we are least hampered by our origin.

If we are prone to take to certain arts and studies rather than to others, that too can be accounted for by

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purely environmental factors. For example, if we are more frequently violinists than pianists, it is not, as a Professor Fritz Lenz suggests, because we are of "Near-Eastern origin," and therefore have an extraordinary development of the auditory and tactile senses. Rather it is because most Jews are poor—especially in Eastern Europe where most of the Jaschas, Mischas, Toschas, and Yehudis are bred—and a violin is the least costly of instruments. If more Jewish parents could afford to buy pianos for their children to play, we should probably have as many great Jewish pianists as violinists. And by the same token, if enough Jewish parents could buy army commissions for their sons, we might produce more than our quota of great military strategists.

For recent psychological research has proved that there is a high degree of correlation among all forms of talent. If we Jews have been backward in some, it has been not because of any mysterious racial incapacity, but because of palpable and immediate social restraints. For example, until a century ago not one known Jew in all history had distinguished himself in painting, sculpture, or acting; and had there been any "racial scientists" at that time, they would undoubtedly have deduced from this that we Jews are congenitally bereft of gifts in those directions. But, as is now obvious, the sole cause was religious restriction. The Bible commandment prohibiting the making of graven images, or likenesses of any sort, made it unthinkable for Jewish

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parents to raise their sons to be painters or sculptors. And the less well-known, though to a pious Jew just as binding, injunction against masquerading (Deuteronomy 22:5) made it impossible for us to go on the stage. Once we ceased to heed those taboos, our rise in those arts was instantaneous. From Joseph Israels to Chagall, from Mark Antokolski to Jacob Epstein, from the "divine" Rachel to Elizabeth Bergner, we have produced an altogether phenomenal array of noted painters, sculptors, and stage-folk. There is no end to the absurdities into which one is tripped once one attempts to trace everything to heredity. One is safe only so long as one keeps in mind the plain facts of material stress and social restriction.

We Jews take to cultural activities because the exigencies of our life encourage us to do so. And if we are extraordinarily successful in those activities, it is perhaps primarily because an extraordinary number of us engage in them. A survey of the enrollment in the Prussian universities in 1911 revealed that out of every 100,000 male inhabitants in the Reich, the Protestants sent 13 students, the Catholics 5, and the Jews 67! Almost as great a disproportion has been noted in the universities of other lands. And were a survey possible of the students of music and art, the disproportion would no doubt be even greater. It is only natural, therefore, since more of us aspire to achieve greatness in cultural pursuits, that more of us should succeed.

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And more of us aspire because almost all of us live in an environment which is conducive to such aspirations. Men who live on the coast are prone to take to seafaring, especially if they cannot eke out a livelihood by husbandry. And similarly we Jews are driven to take to learning and art, for we live where such pursuits are possible, and, being a minority, we find all easier pursuits less accessible.

### 8

There is another marked trait in us which can be accounted for by the exigencies of our life, and that is our inclination toward radicalism. Only urban existence could induce such a trait, for the *urbanus* has always been the forcing-house of change. Not alone the great political revolutions, but also most of the fundamental religious advances, have had their rise in the centers of population. Early Christianity, for example, was able to win converts nowhere save in the cities. The rural folk throughout the Roman Empire were so stubbornly opposed to accepting it in the place of the older religions, that *paganus*, the Latin for "countryman," came in time to be an epithet meaning anti-Christian. Similarly the thirteenth-century heresies could gain popular support only in the urban centers, and likewise the sixteenth-century protestantisms, and the eighteenth-century infidelisms. New ideas are largely produced by spontaneous combustion, and it takes crowding to make

that possible. And for men to dare espouse new ideas they must feel a measure of irresponsibility; and that too is possible only in a crowd. The villager is continually in the eye of his neighbor, and he is deterred from unconventionality by his dread of what his neighbor will say. But the townsman is less influenced by such prying and gossip, for his neighbor is usually a stranger for whose opinion he does not give a fig. "Town air makes one free," runs the medieval proverb; and because of that freedom the town has always been the breeding-place of radicalism.

Now in the past the Jew, for all that he lived in the town, was rarely able to contract this salutary infection. That was because, though he lived *in* the town, he was not entirely *of* it. He was shut away in a ghetto where there was as little subversive thought as in the most isolated village. Political subversiveness was of course out of the question. The Jews were completely cut off from all political life, and they could no more join in the insurrections of the burghers or peasants than help the moon pull the tides. But what was no less marked was the absence of religious subversiveness among them, and that was because of the stifling atmosphere of the ghetto.

A Jew could have none of that sense of recklessness and irresponsibility which is indispensable if one is to become a heretic. He was not an individual but a member of a brotherhood packed close in the fist of Gentile

hostility. He dared not break away and think for himself. If he did (as happened in the case of Spinoza) he became an outcast completely. Therefore orthodoxy remained unshaken in Jewry until a century ago, and still lingers to this day wherever persecution remains intense.

The ghetto walls had to be torn down before the freeing air of the town could begin to assert itself in us. It is almost a law of history that revolutions occur not when oppression is most severe but when it has already begun to slacken. And this law is borne out by what occurred in Jewry. So long as we were in the dust we were content to lie prone. But once we were able to raise our heads, we began to want to stand erect. And it is this want which has impelled us to be so inordinately active in modern revolutionary movements.

We were but a handful in America at the time of the War of Independence, but none the less we managed to make ourselves useful to the revolutionary cause. Haym Salomon, a Polish Jew living in Philadelphia, advanced funds to General Washington when, according to the latter's own words, the fight seemed altogether lost. And when the Republic was established, what few Jews were in the land gathered in their synagogues and thanked the Lord for the victory. The same was true in France when the great Revolution occurred in that country. A tombstone still standing in the old Jewish cemetery in the Rue de Flandre in Paris reveals in what spirit the French Jews regarded that epochal overturn. The stone

marks the grave of a youth who died in the fighting, and the inscription reads: "O immortal soul, seek to live free, or failing that, die as I did, a good republican! Death is better than slavery!"

And once the revolutionary spirit spread to lands where we were more numerous, we did not merely die in the revolutions; we helped to start them. No agitators did more to bring on the Revolution of 1848 than those two Jews, Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne. No names are more illustrious in the history of early Socialism than those of two other Jews, Karl Marx, and Ferdinand Lassalle. It was a Jew, Leon Trotzky, who led the Red Army which saved the Communist cause in Russia. It was a Jew, Karl Liebknecht, aided by a Jewess, Rosa Luxemburg, who led the Spartacist insurrection in Germany. It was a Jew, Bela Kun, who set up the short-lived Red régime in Hungary. It was a Jew, Kurt Eisner, who led the Socialist *Putsch* in Bavaria. Throughout the past century every effort to overthrow privilege has engaged the support of Jews. In every land those who are known as the Children of Jacob have been the most devoted Jacobins.

And this is only natural. It is not, as knaves sometimes suggest, and fools often believe, because we are congenital anarchists and cannot abide the thought of order. Actually we are as a people so enamoured of law and order that to this day millions of us still adhere to a ritual established more than fifteen hundred years ago.



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. . . Nor is it, as romantic eulogists sometimes declare, because the blood of Amos, Isaiah, and Jesus flows in our veins, and a passion for justice is therefore born in us. As we have seen, what with all the interbreeding that has gone on in the past hundred generations, the blood of the prophets must by now be running in all human beings on earth. Besides, if it be claimed that we Jews alone are descended from the Prophets, it must then be granted that we alone are descended also from dastards like Rehoboam and sycophants like Caiaphas. And in any case, what earthly evidence is there that heredity has any connection whatsoever with a vague and complex impulse like the passion for justice? . . . And similarly one cannot believe—though modern rabbis are prone to insist on it—that we Jews are impelled to fight for justice because our religion declares that to be our God-given mission on earth. It is a notorious fact that the devout Jews are fanatically opposed to all change in the established order, and (with rare exceptions) only irreligious ones take any part in revolutionary activity. Besides, if it is our religion that makes us radicals, then Christianity, which is no less insistent on the holiness of fighting for justice, should be equally effective in making radicals of the Gentiles. . . .

No, it is futile to invoke imponderable "race impulses" or elusive "religious incentives" to explain the intransigence which characterizes so many modern Jews. What alone needs to be invoked is the temper bred in us

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by the economic and social pressure to which we are daily subjected. In the first place, most Jews are poor and exploited: they are underpaid, ill-housed, shoddily clad, and without security. If, as is very common, they are shopkeepers or petty industrialists, they are content to suffer thus, for they have high hopes of soon being better off. But if, as is even more common today, those Jews are workers, they have nothing to make them satisfied with the established economic order. On the contrary, they have everything to make them discontented with it. In the second place, they live in the urban centers, where there are liberal forums, Socialist locals, or Communist cells in which such discontent is made vocal and is organized. And, learning of these circles, many Jews inevitably take to attending their meetings. In the third place, they discover that in these circles there is little if any prejudice against them on account of their birth. They are greeted as comrades, not set aside as Jews. As a consequence they have no difficulty in bringing in their kinsmen, many of whom have a great hunger for fellowship beyond the confines of the ghetto. In the fourth place, these Jewish workingfolk are on the average better educated, or at least sharper-witted, than their Gentile comrades. Not merely can more of them read, but more of them *do* read. And this, coupled with the fact that there is no discrimination against them because of their birth, makes it possible for them to rise to leadership in the radical organi-

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zations. And finally, in the established order they suffer not alone from the economic exploitation which is the common lot of all workers, but also from the social obloquy which is the special torment of the Jews. Therefore they are usually more intense than the Gentiles in their devotion to radical causes, for they have more to gain if those causes prevail.

This last factor is the most important one, for it partly explains why not alone the Jewish workers but even more characteristically the Jewish intellectuals will align themselves with the radicals. These intellectuals more than any others feel the barb of antisemitism, for their dearest wish is to do the work for which they have talent, and the prejudice keeps hindering them. Therefore they are often driven to favor radical change in the social order even though such change may bring them economic travail. They realize that every revolution in the past has brought an improvement in the lot of the Jews. The French Revolution led to the destruction of the ghetto walls. The Revolution of 1830 removed all legal odium from Judaism in France. The Revolution of 1848 brought political emancipation to the Jews in Prussia. The overthrow of the Czar emancipated the Jews throughout the Russian realm. For the Jew, therefore, revolutionary activity seems to be the one road to ultimate freedom.

In the light of all these factors, the wonder is not that so many Jews are radicals, but that so many of

them are not. For in actuality the vast majority of Jews, like the vast majority of Gentiles, are altogether docile folk. Even if they are not content with things as they are, they have no will to try to make them better. The pious ones believe that all is in the hands of the Lord, and that when the time is fulfilled He will not fail to send the Anointed One. And the bulk of the indifferent Jews put their faith in petitions and speeches, relying on what there is of good-will among the Gentiles to accord them at last true equality among men. This, however, is rarely realized. It is commonly imagined that *all* Jews are revolutionists—just as it is commonly imagined that all Jews are shrewd, ambitious, over-educated, or afraid to fight. Actually these traits are marked in only a minority of the Jews, but—and this is the crucial point—*that minority is not so small among them as among the Gentiles*. And this is only as it should be, for we Jews live in cities, where such traits have always been nurtured, and our tormented life in the cities makes the cultivation of those traits imperative.

### 9

There may be other traits which make us conspicuous in the world, but these three which I have described—our alienation from the physical, our proclivity for the intellectual, and our addiction to the revolutionary—these, I think, are the salient ones. And all three, as I have tried to show, are a direct consequence of our ab-

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normal confinement to the urban centers. Therefore the hostility between Jew and non-Jew, in so far as it is not a relic from the past, is essentially but an aggravated phase of the universal hostility between the townsman and the rustic.

Between those two there has always been mutual distrust and contempt. The townsman has always looked on the rustic as a dolt, a boor, and a brother to the ox. And the rustic has always thought of the other as a weakling, a cheat, and a creature without faith. The conflict is as old as civilization, and, for all that it has become so uneven since the rise of industrialism, it is still by no means ended. For it is not a set battle between two clearly defined armies. Rather it is a desultory and scattered internecine war in which each individual fights now on one side, now on the other. A man may have an urban attitude in his factory and a provincial attitude in his club. He may make sport of the yokels because they oppose the theory of evolution, and yet be a yokel himself in his horror of the word "revolution." He may be a townsman in his speech and yet a peasant in his impulses. Indeed that is usually the case, for, as has already been said, most of the people who live in cities today were born in villages and are still villagers at heart. Deep in them there remains the conviction that city-life is somehow perverse and makes for the degeneration of the human stock. The very language they use reveals this bias in their minds. The city,

they say, is artificial. (As though an ant-hill were not equally artificial!) To walk on a cement pavement is unnatural. (As though a furrow in the field were qualitatively less unnatural!) Try as they may, they cannot outgrow the peasant conviction that,

“God the first garden made, and the first city Cain.”

And that, I suggest, is why they cannot shake off their prejudice against the Jew. He more than any other being belongs in the city, and therefore he carries most flagrantly the stigma of Cain. In the eyes of the Church the Jew was once the “living symbol of the Lord’s Passion.” But in the eyes of the world he is rather the living symbol of man’s decay. Therefore he is, and must long remain, the most despised of humankind.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?

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IF the theory advanced in the preceding chapter is valid, then the breach between Jew and Gentile is dismayingly grave. We have here a wound that is not alone ancient and festered, but also deep beyond most men's imagining. That is why the primitive remedies that have been applied to it in the past have in so many instances proved ineffective. In medieval times it was thought that if one merely forced the flesh together, and bound it tight, the wound would heal. Accordingly the Jews were compelled to become Christians, and the Inquisition was established to keep them from relapsing. But as we have seen, in most places where that was tried, centuries passed before there was any knitting of the flesh. Indeed, in some places it has not knit to this day. That is because, for one thing, old putrefactions were left in the wound, and the body failed to absorb them. And even more it is because the flesh on one side of the wound was too unlike that on the other. Even though the Jews were made Christians, they remained urban folk, and this almost as much as their old infidelism made them repulsive to the Gentiles.

In Spain and Portugal, for example, the Marranos continued to live primarily by trade and usury, and amid a populace still almost entirely agrarian they therefore continued to appear alien. Not until the Peninsula was flooded with gold from the New World, and commerce became a more common pursuit there, did those former Jews begin at last to be swallowed up. Even then the process was slow, and in Portugal if not in Spain there are gashes left to this hour. Significantly those gashes are to be found only in the remoter townships. The Marranos who remained in Lisbon, Oporto, and the other large cities managed to slough off their identity. But those who sought refuge amid the mountain folk in the northern provinces remained distinctive and therefore had to survive.

If this contention seems forced, there is the history of the Majorcan Jews to bear it out. In their case too there was an attempt to heal the wound without first removing the infected matter. But that is only the minor reason why the wound never healed. The major one is that the Chuetas, despite their religious conversion, still remained too unlike the Gentiles. In the midst of a folk devoted to farming and fishing, they have remained almost exclusively merchants. They have never become rooted in the soil. They have drawn their sustenance by winding their tendrils of trade around others who are rooted. Most of them are pawnbrokers or goldsmiths; or else they are wholesale butchers who grow rich by



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slaughtering what the countryfolk breed. True, they have always confined themselves to such occupations far more from necessity than choice; but that does not in the least redeem them in the eyes of the populace. No matter what the cause, those Chuetas remain distinctive economically, and for that reason as well as tradition they remain despised socially.

### 2

It is obvious then that if the Jewish problem is ever to be solved, far more intelligent measures must be resorted to than those employed by the medievals. First we must cleanse the wound of the old putrefactions which keep it festering. The superstitions left over from the Dark Ages, the malignant associations of Jewry with Christ-killing and ritual-murder—these must be completely eradicated. At the same time all new sources of infection must be dammed. The virus of racialism, and the noxious legend of Jewish cabals—these must be immediately crushed, or they will aggravate the contamination. The wound must be unsparingly cauterized and made so far as possible "sterile." Otherwise it may never heal.

That in itself is an enormous task, and yet it is light compared with the rest that must be done. Even though the wound is cleansed, it will for a long time refuse to mend unless we do something to make the flesh on both sides less reluctant to knit. To accomplish this we must

in a measure redeem the Jews and remake the Gentiles. That is what the Communists are trying to do in Russia, and because of their determination and monstrous energy they may actually effect it in three generations. They are doing more than merely "liquidate" the superstitions and calumnies which have always aggravated the breach between Jews and Gentiles. And they are doing more than bind the two groups together in a common irreligion. In addition they are undertaking to make both as one flesh. They are attempting to reduce the abnormality in the economic life of the Jews, and at the same time set fresh blood coursing through the cultural life of the Gentiles. They realize that anything less than that will defeat their purpose. If, for example, the Jews are allowed to remain entirely urban in their occupations and predilections, they will continue to be hated by the populace. Prevented from engaging in private trade, they will crowd their way into the government offices, and therewith they will remain obtrusive and obnoxious. That danger is a very real one. Indeed, the Jews are already too numerous in the bureaucracy, and that is probably the chief reason why covert antisemitism is still very rife in Russia. Had it not been for the triumph of Stalin over Trotzky in 1926, the hostility to the Jews might by now be flaring openly in Russia. If it is merely smoldering, it is largely because they have become less conspicuous in the government since Stalin and his agrarian element became dominant.

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In a sense the Jews are being discriminated against in Russia, but not quite as in other lands. It is true that they are being discouraged from gravitating to clerical work; but at the same time they are being helped to take to other occupations. A deliberate effort is being made to reorient the Jews so that the pattern of their economic life may become less unlike that of the rest of the population. They are being taught—and largely by their own leaders—that they must cease to look with disdain on manual labor, and need no longer fear to go down to the soil. They are being drawn into the "heavy industries," and settled in farm colonies. A wide region has been set aside for them in Eastern Siberia, and it is planned that when enough of them have established themselves there, the region will become their own autonomous republic.

Whether this far-reaching campaign will prove successful is still uncertain. But at least it is being attempted. Moreover, for all the intemperance of those in command of the campaign, none can doubt the motives behind it. There is no element of spite in this forcible reordering of Jewish life. Rather the feeling is that an ancient wrong is being righted, and the Jews, victimized even more than the Gentiles by the old autocracy, are at last being allowed to live normal lives. It is possible, however, that the Jews will refuse to take adequate advantage of this opportunity. Certainly the masses of them have thus far shown no alacrity in

responding to it. But one must remember that, according to tradition, even when orders came down from God on a fiery mountain, not from a commissar broadcasting from Moscow, it required forty years for the Jews to outgrow their slavishness and become fit to enter the Promised Land. Perhaps it will take as long for this latter-day emancipation to become effective. Perhaps the new generation of Jews, the one now emerging from the Communist schools, will be less passionately intent on crowding into the bureaucracy, and will see honor in humbler walks of life. And if that does happen, the wound will be healed in the Soviet Union. It will be healed not because the Jews will be made over in the image of the Gentiles, but rather because both will be made over in the image of a new type of man. The Jews will be in part economically derurbanized, and the Gentiles will to a profound degree be culturally deruralized; and thus the present breach between them will be closed. Bound tight by common aspirations, the flesh of one will knit with the flesh of the other, and in time perhaps not even a scar will remain. Such at least is the hope of the Communists, and, judging from the steps they have already taken, they may realize it.

But the Soviet Union contains less than one-sixth of the world's Jewry, and there is left the question of what

is to become of the rest. Communism appears far from imminent in the other lands where we dwell, and therefore we can hardly look to it for a universal reordering of our life. Yet there must be reordering of some sort, or else our torment—and the world's too—will never cease. It is imperative, for example, that our alienation from the soil should be ended, and not merely because it makes us hateful to the world, but even more because it creates an unwholesomeness in our own being. In so far as it has induced in us a horror of brutality it has been salutary. But it has done far more than that. It has left us with a dread of the elements and a disdain for earthy toil. Even in Talmudic times we regarded as the lowest among us the *am ha-aretz*, the "man of the soil"; and that attitude has become only aggravated with the passing of time. And this, we know, is not good for us.

But it is not easy for us to change, and, lacking external compulsion, we cannot bring ourselves to do so save under the influence of some overwhelming passion of our own. Happily such a passion does exist in a significant portion of Jewry. It is the hunger for Palestine. Ever since we were dispersed from that land we have looked to it as our real home. No matter where we have wandered or how we have changed, a remnant has always yearned to return there. To be sure, there is no rationality in that yearning. Palestine is a small, ungenerous, and already populated land, and were we

guided by common sense rather than emotion we should seek a homeplace less difficult to make our own. Yet the fact remains that no other attracts us so powerfully; indeed, no other seems to attract us at all. Efforts were made some thirty years ago to divert our home-hunger to Cyprus, Sinai, Uganda, and half a dozen other regions; but invariably they failed. For reasons as real as they are unrealistic, we have always wanted Zion and Zion alone. And therefore it would seem that in Zion more easily than anywhere else can our self-regeneration be effected. Our love for that land may be a madness, but apparently we do need to be a little mad while undergoing so harsh an ordeal. We need to be deadened to terror, and hardened to pain. We need to be swept out of ourselves.

And Palestine does that to us. The proof of it is the phenomenal success of the farm-colonies already established there. I am thinking now not so much of their extent and productivity—and these, too, are phenomenal—as of the spirit animating those who dwell in them. It is, I can testify, altogether unlike the spirit which one finds among Jews who have gone down to the soil in other lands. A number of farm-colonies have been established within the last generation in North and South America, but those who live in them show but little enthusiasm for their work. That is why most of those colonies have failed. Without an almost frantic sense of devotion it is very difficult for a Jew to

reconcile himself to ploughing the earth. And nowhere in the Diaspora, not even in Russia, is such an emotion manifest. When I visited the Jewish "collectives" in the Ukraine a few years ago and asked the settlers what they thought would come of their labor, almost invariably they answered, "*Ver veyst?*—Who knows?" I have not been in Biro-Bidjan, the Siberian center of colonization, so I do not know at first hand what is the prevailing sentiment there. But from the fact that a very large proportion of those who have gone out to that region have drifted back again, I judge that there is even less warmth of spirit there than in the Ukraine. The determined efforts of Moscow will in all likelihood mend the situation in the near future; but that is another matter. What is significant is that even under the inspiration (and urgency) of Communism, the rank and file of the Jews in Russia have as yet shown little enthusiasm for a life on the soil.

Only in Palestine have I found Jews who have taken to such a life with positive passion. When I first visited the young colonies there in 1925, I was troubled by that passion. I thought it smacked of hysteria and would not last. Those boys and girls from the ghettos of Europe seemed phrenetic in the way they flung themselves into their work. Innumerable hardships beset them. They had to contend with malaria, poverty, a stony soil, drought, hostile Arabs, pests, and worst of all their own unfitness. Yet they laughed when I asked

them whether they thought they could ever make that barren waste bloom. "*B'vadai!*" they cried in Hebrew: "Of course!" . . .

And they have already made good their boast. I have revisited the land three times in the past eight years, and what doubts I may once have had have long since been dispelled. Those boys and girls are now men and women, and they are no longer so frenzied as at first. They have ceased to speak of themselves as *halutzim*, "pioneers"; instead they call themselves *poalim*, "workers." For, incredible as it may sound, in less than a decade they have become so adjusted to the new life that they no longer feel the need to dramatize themselves. They already "belong" in the land, and to see them at sunup striding to the stables they themselves have built, or to the fields they themselves have cleared, one would think they had never known any other life.

Yet—and this is almost more remarkable—those workers have not become peasants. Though they have gone down to the soil, they have not sunk into it. Their toil alone is rural; their thought remains urban. Not that they are still absorbed in a feral hunt for gain. The grindstone of commercial competition has been removed, for most of these colonies are either collectively owned or coöperatively administered. What alone remains is the hone of cultural aspiration, and it is on this that they keep their intellects keen. Once the day's



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labor is done, those men and women gather in their communal halls and fall to reading or discussion. I have heard more exhaustive debate on Dewey's pedagogical methods in a barn in the Valley of Esdraelon than in any seminar at Columbia University. I have seen road-builders halt in the midst of their noonday meal to argue over the Marxian dialectic; and I have seen ploughmen sit up half the night to hear one of their comrades play Mozart concertos. The discussion may not have been very erudite, and the playing was certainly not expert; but that is beside the point. What matters is that manual laborers should have a love for such cultural pursuits. What matters even more is that they are rearing their children to love them, and are thus laying the foundation for what may be a new type of society on earth. They are bringing the culture of the city out into the countryside so that life there can tower as well as grow roots. They are wedding brains to brawn, and learning to vigor. In fine, they are making life rounded and whole.

That is why the furthering of the Zionist movement seems to me of paramount importance if the problem of the Jew is ever to be solved. The value of that movement lies not alone in the relief it offers by providing a home for those Jews who cannot or will not live elsewhere. Of far greater significance is the promise it gives of encouraging the physical de-urbanization of world Jewry. What is being done largely under com-

pulsion in Russia, is being done entirely of volition in Palestine. For that reason if for no other it is being done better in Palestine. Moreover, it is being done there far more attractively and dramatically, and there is thus a greater likelihood of emulation on the part of Jews living in other lands. Already one finds farm-colonies of the Zionist type established in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, and even the United States. At present they are merely training-places for young men and women who are preparing to migrate to Palestine. But in time they and their like may become permanent settlements for Jews who have no intention of leaving the lands where they now dwell.

And if there is to be any refashioning of the pattern of our economic life, such a development is imperative. Palestine will never be able to contain more than a small fraction of all the Jews on earth. The rest will have to remain where they are now, and for them there will be no escape from obloquy unless (among other things) they become partially restored to the soil. And the example set in Palestine may make that process less difficult for them. There are millions of poverty-stricken Jews living in city-slums throughout the world today who would be incalculably better off were they settled in the provinces. As truck-farmers or dairymen they might escape the exploitation which is the lot of all industrial wage-slaves. Or as fishermen, miners, or even day-laborers, they might at least get some respite from

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

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the economic discrimination to which they are subjected at present. But they refuse to take to such pursuits because, before all else, they have a rooted contempt for them. Offer such people a chance to do heavy manual labor and almost invariably they retort, "*Dos is kein arbeit far a yid*—That's no work for a Jew!" But once they see that in Palestine hundreds of thousands of their brethren take positive pride in such work, their attitude may change. If they themselves still refuse to desert the occupations, at least they will not deter their sons and daughters from deserting them. And thus out of Zion may come forth a spirit which will encourage Jewry throughout the world to reorder its economy.

### 4

But such a reordering is not all that is required. In addition to a change in Jewish ways of making a living there must be a change in Gentile ways of thought. If the one group must be physically de-urbanized, the other must be intellectually de-ruralized. For thus alone can a healing be effected. The Gentile masses must be stirred out of their mental torpor and made to move forward. They must be taught to think before they believe, and to enquire before they lash out. They must be freed of their dread of the strange, and emptied of their contempt for the weak. And they must be shown that the world does not halt at the horizon, and that

## HOW ODD OF GOD

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wisdom is not confined to the past. In a word they must be made urbane.

Failing that, they will never be able to accept the Jew. No matter how he strive to make himself over, they will continue to regard him as alien, and therefore despicable. Moreover they will continue to try to plague him to death, not realizing that thus do they most effectively keep him alive. Therefore the ultimate need is a quickening of intellect and a cleansing of soul among the Gentiles. Until that is achieved, the Jew will know no rest, and the world will have no peace. Ahasuerus, the Eternal Wanderer, will continue to wander—until light comes to redeem all mankind.

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